

SEPTEMBER 8, 2003

The American Conservative

TOTAL RECALL



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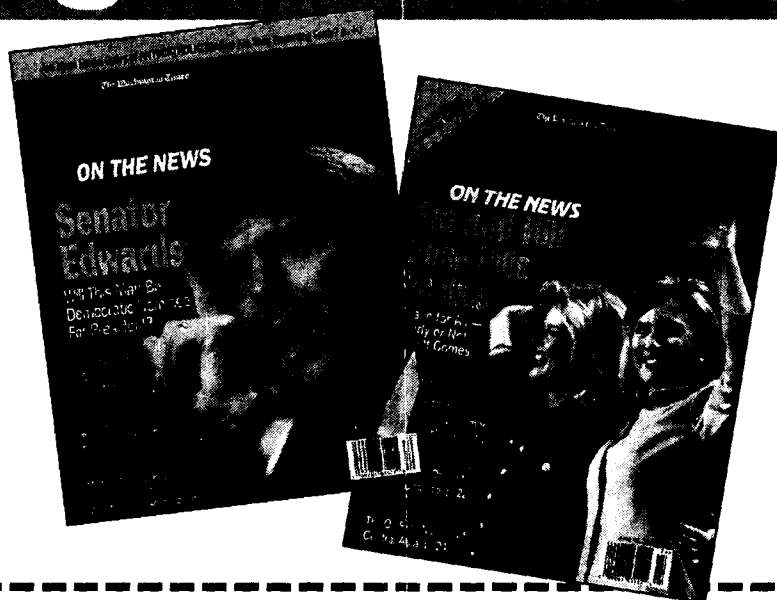
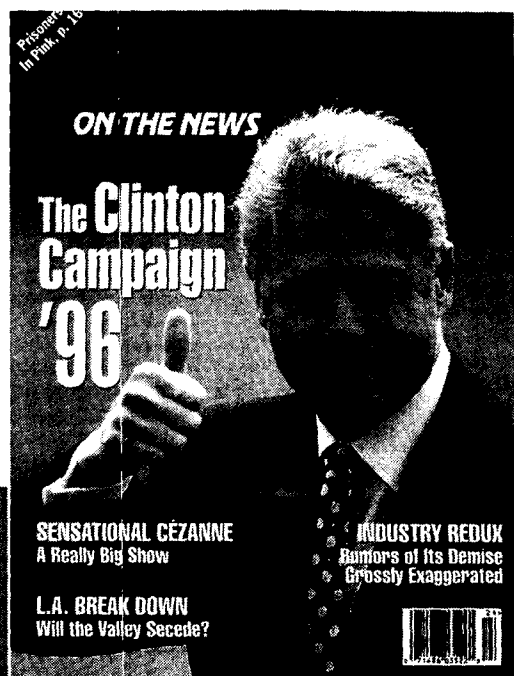
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[PUBLIC WORKS]

DARKNESS AT 4 P.M.

One night without lights was an adventure: at dusk on Aug. 14, Manhattan streets buzzed with the happy prospect of the unanticipated. It wore off quickly, and one dreaded the metropolitan area without power and running water for more than a day.

"It should be lights out in Belgrade, every power grid, water pipe, bridge and war-related factory has to be targeted ... you want 1950? We can do 1950. You want 1389? We can do 1389 too." So wrote the *New York Times's* Tom Friedman, as American bombers worked over Serbia's power grid four years ago, plunging into darkness a country that had never threatened us. His argument seemed to reflect what Senator Fulbright once called "the arrogance of power"—though Friedman has had many competitors recently.

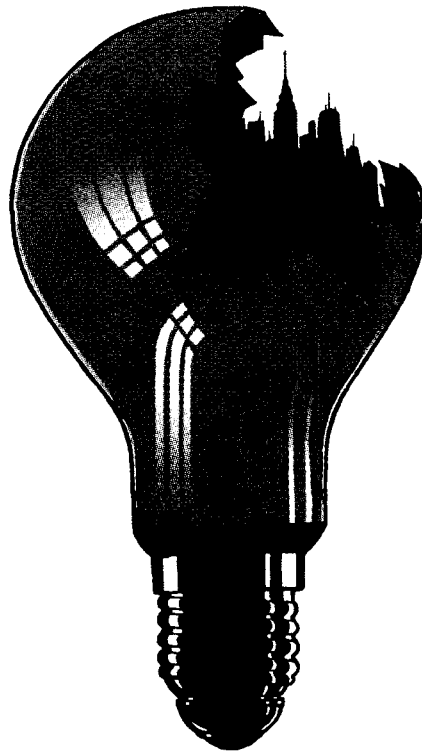
Baghdad greeted news of New York's blackout with smiles—the city whose lights U.S. air power has repeatedly turned off in the past decade seemed pleased that America had received a tiny bit of its own medicine.

Perhaps there is no role for karma in international affairs and a superpower can impose its will indefinitely, using its air force to turn lights on and off in far corners of the globe. Perhaps. But we now know a North American power grid can go down without even being bombed—simply failing to maintain and upgrade it are sufficient. And as some of us trudged up and downstairs with candles last week, we were a little more aware of our vulnerability.

[INTELLIGENCE]

GIVE WAR A CHANCE

Some prominent personalities in Iran and Washington were hoping to forge a meaningful détente between the two countries. As reported in a private newsletter prepared by former CIA



officers Vincent Cannistraro and Philip Giraldi, Iranian President Mohammad Khatami sought to open a channel to Washington after Iraq fell, getting word to former National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft that Iran was prepared to co-operate in areas of terrorism and nuclear proliferation. Tehran would restrain Hezbollah, turn over al-Qaeda operatives, and allow American inspectors to monitor its nuclear program. Khatami reportedly asked that the overtures be kept secret, as publicity would stir up confrontation with anti-Western hardliners in Iran.

Scowcroft turned the information over to Condoleezza Rice, who shared it with Donald Rumsfeld. Within days, officials at the Pentagon opposed to talks with Iran leaked news of the report to a British newspaper, and the Iranians immediately ended contact. At roughly the same time, Ariel Sharon was in Washington, pressing for a pre-emptive strike against Tehran's nuclear facilities.

The increasingly difficult occupation of Iraq isn't enough for our neocons, who still dream of pushing the United States into war against six or seven Muslim countries. Evidently dialogue between Washington and Tehran—even if it leads to co-operation with Iran in the war against al-Qaeda and a resolution of the nuclear stalemate—is not high on the agenda.

[CULTURE]

DAY CARE DEAREST

"Leave No Child Behind," makes a nifty campaign slogan, but every morning millions of parents do just the opposite, parking their kids in the care of near strangers as they head off to work.

In his new book, *Day Care Deception*, Brian Robertson reports that between 1970 and 1995, the proportion of working married mothers with children under six rose from 30 percent to 64 percent. Care arrangements have shifted to accommodate, and have-it-all parents aren't eager to compound their guilt by figuring the cost. But a pair of recent studies shows that children pay dearly for hours spent in day care.

In addition to the usual complaints: increased illness, attachment issues, separation anxiety, and slower cognitive development, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), after conducting the largest long-term study of its kind, confirmed that the more time a child spends in care, the higher the incidence of behavior problems and the greater their severity. (Not surprisingly, the NICHD sought to pad its press release with the reassuring subhead, "Vast Majority of Children Within Normal Range.") The issue of *Child Development* that published the NICHD findings also featured a University of Minnesota study showing that cortisol, a hormone associated with stress, rose while children were in day care and fell once they returned home.

A 1997 Pew poll found that only 17 percent of women thought it beneficial for children to have their mothers work, and 69 percent said they would prefer to stay home or scale back to part time. But the current tax structure—which in 1950, according to Robertson, exempted half of all married couples from federal taxes—makes this increasingly difficult. So while parents struggle to pay ever more, so too will their children.

[IMMIGRATION]

BRITS IN FLIGHT

Just as there have been decades of American working-class flight from California to points east, in Britain there is a movement away from the immigration-swollen cities of London, Manchester, and Liverpool to rural Wales. Given the race riots that have flared in Britain's cities—confirming Enoch Powell's warnings of 35 years ago—it is not surprising that Brits would seek calmer and more predictable places to raise their families.

Not surprising, but according to some, blameworthy. One Welsh writer has denounced his countrymen for using Wales as a “place to get away from multi-cultural society.” He quotes unnamed pub patrons saying things like “Isn't it nice without the Pakis?”

What a curious (and uniquely Western) phenomenon that one must celebrate the transformation of neighborhoods, schools, and cities—or be labeled a bigot. What could be the next step? As Britain already has laws designed to tamp down criticism of immigration, perhaps internal passports to prevent people from moving? For years Britain and the U.S. have been in competition to see which society can more effectively stamp out popular resistance to high immigration and multiculturalism. During the '80s, America held a clear lead, but under Blair, Britain has rallied sharply.

[MEDIA]

REFLECTIONS ON THE REVOLUTION IN ENGLAND

Twenty years ago, occasional *AC* contributor Roger Scruton and a small circle of other traditionalists founded the *Salisbury Review*, one of only two distinctly conservative journals in England. Named for Lord Salisbury, the distinguished turn-of-the-century Tory prime minister, the *Review* exists to gainsay prevailing orthodoxies and champion traditional wisdom, once revered but now reviled.

At its inception, the *Review* faced many challenges well known to this magazine: how to encourage cautious intellectuals to contribute to a conservative publication; how to build an audience; how to define “conservatism,” that congeries of ideas most resistant to synoptic definition. Then came the ideological attacks: the journal was called “racist” for venturing to address the question of national identity; Scruton, a noted philosopher, was exiled from English academia.

While taking a great personal toll on its editors, the campaign of suppression failed to extinguish the *Review's* unique journalistic voice. In the 1980s, it proved a source of hope to the peoples of Eastern Europe and of consternation to their Communist secret police. Gracing its pages have been the bylines of former Czech President Václav Havel, the late literary critic A.L. Rowse, mystery-writer P.D. James, and other worthy names in Western letters.

With justifiable pride, Scruton writes in the London *Spectator*, “Without claiming too much credit for this, I remain convinced that the *Salisbury Review* helped a new generation of conservative intellectuals to emerge.” This indeed is the good fruit of two decades' labor as a thoughtful, independent journal of opinion. We wish it continued success in the years ahead. ■

The American Conservative

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PASSIONATE DEBATE

As a leftist with an open mind but an aversion to promise-breaking elite liberals, I have benefited a great deal from your august publication. It is fantastically put together and diverse—Norman Mailer, James Zogby, Taki, and Traditionalist Catholicism under one roof! While I realize that diversity is not an issue of choice among many American Rightists, from a Left standpoint, your publication is a lot more diverse than, say, the *New Republic*.

This being said, I hoped that your defense of Mel Gibson's film, "The Passion" (Aug. 11) would give some context to why we Jews are slightly perturbed. From a Jewish perspective, the Passion Play has long been used as "preparation" for organized anti-Jewish activities, well before the founding of Israel. The Russian Tsarists and German Nazis regularly used Passion Plays to soften up their populations, as, apparently, did Spain at the time of the Inquisition.

As more conservatives see Israel for what it is: an American client that, like others before it from Noriega to Hussein, has caused quite a bit of inconvenience, this is no reason to lapse from reasonable opposition to unreasonable anti-Semitism. Showing the Passion Play without some information as to how Jews have been called "Christ Killers" is not conservative; it is theocratic and racist. I am sure that Mel Gibson realizes this and will attach a disclaimer to what looks to be a magnificent work of motion-picture art.

JORDY CUMMINGS
Toronto, Ontario

MADE IN MEXICO

Pat Buchanan's hard-hitting polemic against free trade (Aug. 11) was brought home to me this past week at the inner-city Chicago hospital where I'm employed. Recently, our facility installed a new air conditioning system largely

funded by grants from the federal and state governments. I had the chance to go down into our sub-basement and view one of the giant "chillers" that power up the hospital's coolers. To my horror I saw a sign affixed to the machine noting it had been manufactured at a *maquiladora* plant in Durango, Mexico. One can only imagine how many American jobs were lost just in this one project!

DAVID L. BLATT
Chicago, Ill.

OAFISH HAND OF STATISM

Concerning Pat Buchanan's paranoid protectionist screed (Aug. 11), no King Canute protectionism will stop the rest of the world from challenging American industry if it is fit to do so. Scratch a protectionist thesis and you find the oafish hand of Statism, the fatal conceit of the paper-pushing bureaucrat or academic trying to order the universe.

Mr. Buchanan should concentrate on some true outrages inherent in the trade issue: that outcropping of corporate welfare known as export subsidy and the massive defense subsidy America gives its economic rivals in Europe and Asia.

J. WROBLEWSKI
Vancouver, British Columbia

LEFT-RIGHT CONVERSATION

I enjoyed Scott McConnell's recent piece, "How Dean Could Win" (Aug. 11). I'm a Dean supporter and Democrat with a healthy respect for the frankness of the traditional conservative perspective.

One thing I'd point out is that Dean does address immigration issues in the context of international trade, and he's of the opinion that by negotiating "fair trade" policies America can help structure a functioning middle class in countries such as Mexico that will reduce our illegal immigration problem while enhancing our shared environmental resources. You're right to say that he's an

internationalist, but I wonder if his approach might achieve some of the goals of a conservative policy by alternate means. You say we ought to protect our labor market from resembling Mexico's or Brazil's, and Dean is proposing to make Brazil look like the United States rather than the other way around.

There seems to be a growing base of agreement among Democrats and conservatives on a broad range of issues—for example, the past few years have enlightened a lot of liberals to the value of states' rights. Thank you for helping to build on the conversation between the two in a meaningful way, and thanks for a great article.

MATT WAGGNER
Los Angeles, Calif.

NO DOGS OR IRISHMEN

Joseph De Feo's "The New Know-Nothings" (Aug. 11) boldly catalogs modern liberal American anti-Catholicism. But anti-Catholicism is a foundational principle for the United States. The Pilgrims and Puritans settled New England precisely in reaction to Anglicanism's hold-over Catholic elements. Although Maryland was founded as a Catholic colony, as soon as Protestants took control of its legislature, they barred Catholics from voting and holding public office. America's political system is rooted in Anglo-Saxon Protestantism and its economic system in a Weberian paradigm. Normally, *AC* would champion fidelity to America's foundational principles. What a surprise it is to see them characterized as "outrages" in your pages!

DINO DRUDI
Washington, D.C.

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The Tojo Doctrine

August always calls to mind the final weeks of the war in 1945: Hiroshima on Aug. 6, Nagasaki on Aug. 9, the surrender of Aug. 15. Formal surrender in September

to General MacArthur on the Missouri in Tokyo Bay was but a photo op.

Today, World War II is recalled as the "good war" on Hitler's empire. But that was not true for the generation that lived through it. For even the youngest, it was, first and foremost, a war against the evil empire that had carried out the sneak attack on Pearl Harbor.

And understandably so. Even before U.S. troops first clashed with Rommel's Afrika Corps, Pearl Harbor, the Coral Sea, Midway, Bataan, Corregidor, the Doolittle Raid, and Guadalcanal were already burned in our memories. And while the morality of our war measures—the fire-bombing of Tokyo, Hiroshima, Nagasaki—is still debated, no one denies the morality of the war itself.

Yet, even as Bush and Tony Blair today face charges of having "lied us into war," so, too, did FDR. Even more so.

Indeed, why did Japan, an island nation smaller than Montana, attack the most powerful nation on earth? How did Hirohito and Tojo expect to win a war to the death with America that they must have known a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor would ignite?

In 1952, the great revisionist historian Charles Callan Tansill, in *Back Door to War: The Roosevelt Foreign Policy 1933-1941*, concluded it was not Japan that sought war with us, but FDR who sought war with Japan, as a back door to war with Nazi Germany. His case: in 1931, Japan occupied Manchuria as a defensive move to secure her northern

flank from Stalin who had seized Outer Mongolia and Sinkiang. Manchuria was as critical to Japan as Mexico is to us.

In 1937, following a clash on the Marco Polo Bridge outside Peiping, Japan and China went to war. For four years they fought, with Japan controlling the coasts and China the interior. For three years of this war, America saw no vital interest at risk and remained uninvolved.

But when Japan joined the Axis and occupied Indochina, FDR sent military aid to Chiang Kai-shek under lend-lease and approved the dispatch of the Flying Tigers to fight against Japan. He ordered B-17s to Manila to prepare to attack Japan's home islands. He secretly promised the Dutch and British that, should Japan attack their Asian colonies, America would go to war. Japan was aware of it all.

In July 1941, FDR froze Japan's assets, shutting off her oil. Adm. Richmond Kelly Turner warned FDR it meant war.

Indeed, when Israel's oil supply was imperiled by Nasser's threat to close the Straits of Tiran to ships docking in Israel, the Israelis launched their own Pearl Harbor, destroying the Egyptian air force on the ground before invading the Sinai and ending the oil threat to Israel's survival.

Nevertheless, knowing it meant war, FDR cut off Japan's oil. Thus was the Japanese empire and national economy, entirely dependent on imported oil, put under a sentence of death.

Japanese militarists wanted war but

the government of Prince Konoye did not. He offered to meet FDR anywhere in the Pacific. The prince told the U.S. ambassador that if oil shipments were renewed, Tokyo was ready to pull out of Indochina and have FDR mediate an end to the Sino-Japanese war. FDR spurned the offer.

Japan then sent an envoy to Washington to seek negotiations. On Nov. 26, Secretary of State Cordell Hull rejected negotiations and handed an ultimatum to the Japanese: get out of Indochina and China.

Japan faced a choice: accept a humiliating retreat from an empire built with immense blood and treasure, or seize the oil-rich Dutch East Indies. Pearl Harbor followed. The Tojo Doctrine of preemptive war.

Did FDR truly believe China's integrity was a vital interest? Hardly. Once war broke out, China was ignored. The Pacific took a back seat to Europe. U.S. forces on Corregidor were abandoned. Aid to Churchill and Stalin and war on Germany took precedence over all.

At Yalta, FDR, without consulting Chiang Kai-shek, ceded to Stalin Chinese territories that were to be taken from Japan.

Was America's war on Japan a just war? Assuredly. Were U.S. vital interests threatened by Japan? No. Provoking war with Japan was FDR's back door to the war he wanted—with Hitler in Europe.

After a meeting with FDR, Nov. 25, Secretary of War Henry Stimson wrote in his diary that the main question is "how we maneuver them into the position of firing the first shot without allowing too much danger to ourselves." That is the American way to war. ■

[california dreamin']

Total Recall

Open borders cost California billions—and maybe the governor his seat.

By Steven Greenhut

ORANGE COUNTY, CALIF.—Americans from saner parts of the country are having a good laugh at Californians' expense, and who can blame them? Most states manage to hold gubernatorial elections at regularly scheduled intervals with relatively normal candidates, and balance their budgets each year without much problem.

Over the last four years, California—whose officials sometimes see themselves as progressive examples that the world should follow—cannot even get the basics right. It's been one crisis after another, with the big-news political-recall spectacle the direct result of the budget and electrical crises that preceded it.

Democratic Gov. Gray Davis, the man on the hot seat, is given little chance of surviving because he has been perceived as having done nothing to solve, and a lot to exacerbate, the problems Californians are tired of enduring. There's a widespread sense among working people and small-business owners that the ongoing rebellion, however unusual, is the last chance to stave off yet another 1990s-style middle-class out-migration to Arizona and Nevada.

The driving issue is the state budget deficit, which has reached an estimated \$38 billion. That's a larger sum than the total state budget of every other state, excluding New York. When Governor Davis trounced Republican candidate Dan Lungren in 1998—a mainstream conservative Republican of the sort that could never win a statewide election in California today—the state government was awash in cash. What happened?

As the governor and his dwindling defenders explain it, the state was rocked by the national recession, something that hit California particularly hard because of its progressive, capital-gains-based tax system. When over-inflated dot-com stocks went bust, the state's budget went bust along with it.

But as *Sacramento Bee* columnist Dan Walters, one of the state's shrewdest political observers, recently explained, "The undisputed fact is that after a severe recession ended in the mid-1990s, the state experienced a solid, if unspectacular, gain in tax revenues for four years before the highly volatile high-tech industry produced a spike in personal income taxes ... that

lasted just one year before revenues resumed their normal pattern of slow growth."

Basically, Davis and the Democratic-dominated Legislature locked in new spending as if the one-year spike represented a permanent new flow of tax dollars. State government grew in the Davis years by an astounding 37 percent. He lavished salary and pension increases on the politically powerful public-employee unions. Education spending, health care, and prison spending all exploded. The general-fund budget grew from about \$58 billion to \$78 billion.

When the budget hit the wall in 2003, the Legislature wanted to increase taxes to fix the mess. But, understanding that a tax hike would only enable Democrats to continue on their merry spending ways, the embattled Republican minority held firm. Given the state's two-thirds majority vote requirement for passing a budget, Democrats needed a handful of GOP votes to pass a tax increase. Senate Republican Leader Jim Brulte threatened to help unseat any Republican who voted for a tax-raising budget, so Democrats blinked on the tax issue



CHRIS HEERS

(although they winked when the Davis administration tripled the car tax by a questionable administrative act). But enough Republicans voted for a cobble-together budget deal that raises spending by \$1 billion and locks in a structural \$8 billion annual deficit.

This disaster passed with a backdrop of manufacturing businesses fleeing the state as workers' compensation premiums have gone up as much as 400 percent. It followed a botched electricity deregulation deal that has dramatically hiked electricity rates. These events provided further impetus for a growing movement to recall a governor who has been immobile in the face of every problem, doing little more than fund-raising and blaming others while Sacramento burned.

The recall has been one big brouhaha, the likes of which hasn't been seen since

the passage of tax-limiting Proposition 13 in 1978. It was pushed ahead by the grassroots, over the objections of mainstream party operatives, the media and big business, although it got a boost when millionaire Congressman Darrell Issa, the onetime replacement candidate who later withdrew from the race, put his cash behind it.

The two main conservative candidates to replace Davis, State Sen. Tom McClintock (R-Thousand Oaks), a true-blue tax-fighting conservative, and businessman Bill Simon, who ran an embarrassing campaign against Davis in 2002, have good strategies to rein in the government. But even they have generally avoided a topic that only occasionally registers on the Richter scale. That is the obvious role of immigration, legal and illegal, in the state's troubled fiscal and political situation.

After Arnold Schwarzenegger announced his gubernatorial candidacy at the Los Angeles County Registrar of Voters office, one reporter asked him about his views on immigration. The actor launched into a touching, yet mostly irrelevant, discussion about his rags-to-riches past, and his sympathy for those who flee to California for a better life. That appeared to be the end of the discussion.

Then two days later, the news broke: Schwarzenegger had endorsed Proposition 187, the 1994 ballot initiative that denied most public services to illegal immigrants. It passed overwhelmingly despite an unconscionable smear campaign against it, then was gutted by the courts. Governor Davis refused to appeal the decision, and the establishment was glad the issue seemed to go away. But it simmered below the surface.

The news coverage of the Schwarzenegger/187 connection reinforced a sad reality: immigration, even the sub-issue of illegal immigration, is off limits from serious public discussion. Democrats and their media allies used Schwarzenegger's past support for 187 as political gotcha, a way to drive a wedge between the Austrian-born actor and the state's Latino population, which constitutes 17 percent of California's electorate.

Conventional wisdom holds that support for Prop. 187 is the kiss of death. Even most Republicans believe Republican Gov. Pete Wilson's support for the initiative in 1994 alienated generations of immigrant voters from the GOP and relegated the party to permanent minority status. Ironically, Wilson and several of his advisers are guiding the Schwarzenegger team.

Americans in other parts of the country generally have a hard time understanding how dramatically mass immigration has altered the California landscape. The raw numbers are startling: more than quarter of the state's population is foreign born, with immigrants and their children composing

As one commentator put it recently, California is becoming an island unto itself, ever more distinct from the remaining 49 states but ever closer in demographics and attachment to the Pacific Rim and Latin America.

Old-fashioned assimilation still takes place, and many of the new immigrants can teach native-born Americans a lesson or two in hard work, family values, and independence from government. But facts are facts. California's population is expected to reach nearly 50 million by 2020, and almost all the growth is coming from relatively poor immigrants and the children of immigrants already living here.

As former Controller Kathleen Connell, a Democrat, told me in an interview last year, 62 percent of the state's taxes are paid by 5 percent of the people. That 5 percent is mostly the aging Anglo population. These people are retiring to other states or taking their businesses elsewhere. They are being replaced by masses of immigrants who pay few taxes and use many public services.

Yet no one will honestly talk about the mess. The media see the demographic shift and know any growth in viewers or

weblog. "You bet. A big niche. Specifically, none of the major candidates is displaying conspicuous doubts about the state's policy of accommodating itself to continued illegal immigration, especially from Mexico. It's not as if a 'border control' platform wouldn't command substantial voter support, probably even majority support." As Kaus points out, there is an enormous under-the-surface backlash to exploit given that Gov. Gray Davis has said he will sign a law giving illegal immigrants drivers' licenses and did sign a law giving illegal immigrants in-state college-tuition discounts.

No doubt, as Dan Stein of the Federation for American Immigration Reform pointed out in a recent *San Jose Mercury News* column, "It is virtually impossible to set an exact dollar figure on the cost of immigration because money flows in and out of state coffers in so many different ways and, because the issue is so politically sensitive, most politicians eschew efforts to even come up with cost estimates." But that "does not mean that the state can go on blithely ignoring its enormous fiscal impact."

We can get some idea of the cost, in bits and pieces. For instance, even Davis asked the federal government last year to pay California \$1 billion for terrorist-related security, including paying for illegal immigrants in California prisons, according to a *Los Angeles Times* article.

A 1997 survey by the National Academy of Sciences said it cost each California household more than \$1,100 a year to pay for services to all immigrants. Estimates put the cost of "free" health care for illegal immigrants at California hospitals at \$400 million annually, absorbed mainly by taxpayers.

More than 40 percent of the state's budget is constitutionally earmarked for public schools. Yet the courts have mandated that every child, here legally or not, is entitled to a "free" education.

SIXTY-TWO PERCENT OF THE STATE'S TAXES ARE PAID BY 5 PERCENT OF THE PEOPLE. THAT 5 PERCENT IS MOSTLY THE AGING ANGLO POPULATION.

nearly half of the state's population.

The Census Bureau released statistics showing that between 1995 and 2000, 2.2 million Californians left the state for other states, whereas only 1.4 million people from other states moved here. Yet although many of the state's middle-class residents moved elsewhere, population has grown by about 600,000 a year, almost entirely from immigrants and their California-born children.

readers will come from the ranks of immigrants, which reduces the media's willingness to discuss immigration in a way that can be perceived as negative. Politicians are the same way. They know where their new ranks of voters will come from and act accordingly.

"Is there any vote-rich niche left unexploited by a candidate in California's gubernatorial recall election?" asks liberal pundit Mickey Kaus in a *Slate*

Similar pressures are burdening every aspect of the state's infrastructure. The sheer numbers are also harming immigrants already living here and are thus making them more dependent on existing public services.

"Their [illegal immigrants'] presence makes our own poor more destitute, creating a Third World chaos in the California economy that we are only beginning to understand," wrote Fred Dickey in a recent *Los Angeles Times Magazine* article. He documents the plight of an American citizen of Mexican descent who is a maid in San Diego. Constant competition from illegal workers lowers her wages and makes it impossible for her to lobby her bosses for medical insurance. Dickey also details the state's growing underground economy. Many of us who live here have undoubtedly experienced its benefits, given the low cost of gardeners, movers, and other low-skilled labor. But, as Dickey explains, such cheap labor has a high cost. Legitimate contractors often work off the books in order to compete. He points to studies estimating that the state loses somewhere between \$3 billion and \$7 billion a year in unpaid taxes because of this underground economy.

Consider that in the context of the state's budget crisis. Even the studies by pro-immigration groups are stuck rationalizing rather than disputing the costs of legal and illegal immigration. One paper by the RAND Corporation argues, "[T]he services provided to immigrants, especially education and health services, can appropriately be regarded as investments made today in expectation of a return to be received tomorrow." But even if an immigrant pays his own way over a lifetime, the system is being overwhelmed by so many new immigrants that come here each year.

Beyond the costs, the state's political climate has changed dramatically be-

cause of immigration. Throughout the San Gabriel Valley suburbs east of Los Angeles, state Assembly and Senate districts went in the early 1990s from solid Republican to solid Democratic in two or three years as the middle class fled the recession and immigrants continued to move in, recalls state Assemblyman Ray Haynes (R-Murrieta). Similar shifts have happened throughout the state, even in the rural Central Valley.

The new minority-majority districts are often represented by far-Left Latino politicians, where solid conservatives used to win the day. So the more immigration that takes place, the less chance

a political solution can fix it. That might explain why Californians are taking matters into their own hands with the recall.

But if no serious recall candidate will forthrightly confront illegal immigration and its impact on the budget, then it's doubtful that anything much will change should a new governor take office. The whole revolution will not have made any difference, and California could eventually resemble the Third-World economies that so many of its residents fled. ■

Steven Greenhut is a senior editorial writer and columnist for the Orange County Register in Santa Ana, Calif.

Inshallah in Iraq

Daily life and the clash of civilizations

By Peter Wood

I RECENTLY SPOKE to an American businessman who had just returned from an Arab capital where he had been helping to straighten out the finances of a private organization that receives some U.S. government support. Noticing some unfunded commitments in the organization's books, the businessman turned to the local accountant, who good-naturedly explained, "*Inshallah*"—"God wills it."

The local accountant wasn't incompetent and, far from being flip, was eager to help his American counterpart. But where the American expected precision, his counterpart offered approximation, and where the Yank looked for closure, his Arab acquaintance was satisfied with deferral.

When we speak of the "clash of civilizations," the phrase inevitably calls to

mind differences on fundamental issues such as freedom of religion, representative government, and protection of human rights. Our civilizations also clash because of the West's economic dynamism, unmatched for centuries by anything in the Arab part of the Muslim world. But the clash of civilizations is also present in the seemingly incidental minutiae of day-to-day life that reveal different assumptions about the way the world works and how practical people get things done.

We actually know a lot about these cultural differences, but perhaps this is a moment to remind ourselves. To say what we "know" about cultural differences in any part of the world may be "arrogant." That's the usual charge from the anti-globalizing Left. And any number of post-colonial academic theorists would hasten to

add that to stereotype the Arab world is just to pile on to an old prejudicial tradition of "Orientalism," the term popularized by the Palestinian-born American English professor Edward Said.

But I don't think that Said and his followers in the Middle East Studies Association should necessarily have the last word. I argue in my book *Diversity* that Americans in recent years have grown so wary of saying anything offensive that we have collectively shut down much of our capacity even to notice many kinds of real cultural difference. We are schooled by diversiphiles from kindergarten through graduate school to see only differences that can be "celebrated." Unsure what can be celebrated? The implied counsel of the diversiphiles is: then keep your mouth shut.

As a result, we lose access to and the opportunity to talk about what are really perfectly valid responses to cultural difference, including shock, annoyance, amazement, and just plain puzzlement. And there is plenty in the Arab world that should be puzzling to Americans who look at it with an open mind. Here are three perfectly valid observations extracted from the older more self-confident tradition of Western observation of Arab culture:

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No deal is ever final. Americans view agreements as contracts, even if they are not formally structured that way. We negotiate hard, but when an agreement is reached, we have a strong expectation that both sides will live up to it. If the deal comes apart, we look for compensation. In the Arab world, a deal is never final; it is, rather, a moment in an ongoing relationship between the parties and is

THE ENDLESSLY REPEATED PHRASE "GOD WILLS IT" IS A WAY OF KEEPING AN EYE ON THE EXITS.

subject to further revision in light of what comes next in that relationship. Even a bargain with a street vendor in Cairo or Baghdad has a bit of this provisionality. Both sides see the exchange not as a one-time transaction but as a possible prelude to future dealings.

Inshallah is more important than insurance. The endlessly repeated phrase "God wills it" is a way of keeping an eye on the exits. Americans tend to plan for unhappy eventualities such as illness, accident, and death by hedging against them with insurance policies. We try to reduce uncertainty by channeling it as much as possible into known contingencies. We do this on the individual level and in business. In the Arab world, people have just as much common sense and foresight as we do, but they tend to respond with a strategy of leaving their options open. The main hedges against disaster are loyalty to family and cultivation of lasting friendships.

Inshallah does not mean that Arabs are poor or inattentive planners. The 9/11 terrorists and other Arab al-Qaeda operatives cannot be faulted for lack of practical planning. But there is a difference between relentless pursuit of a collective goal and a general attitude of waiting to see how things will

turn out. The Arabs are not the Swiss. Both may like expensive watches, but the Swiss watch the time, the Arabs watch each other.

Deferral beats defeat. Americans know about living to fight another day. Here in Boston, we understand the Red Sox. But we also draw clear boundaries between success and failure, victory and defeat. Arab culture allows for many

more evasions than we are used to—occasions on which the seemingly defeated party can put off a final day of reckoning, re-group, and try again. Defeat can itself be defeated by endless deferral. Clearly Saddam Hussein understands this game. Our ongoing clash of civilizations pits the American desire for decisive victory against the former dictator's desire for an indecisive loss. Essentially we play two different games. We define victory as forcing Saddam out of power and replacing the Ba'athist one-party state. Yet he may win if, even at the cost of his own life, he leaves a legacy of political and social turmoil.

I don't know if these are the best maxims to extract from the so-called Orientalist literature so derided by today's post-colonial scholars. But they are a starting place. As the reconstruction proceeds, I intend to devote some time to seeing what the travelers, diplomats, missionaries, and ethnologists of yore have by way of counsel for us when they spoke candidly about Arab culture. I consider it a kind of insurance against the advice of today's experts. *Inshallah.* ■

Peter Wood is an Associate Professor of Anthropology at Boston University and the author of Diversity: The Invention of a Concept.

Divide & Leave

A blueprint for building the new Iraq

By John C. Hulsman and William L.T. Schirano

IN THIS SEASON of conflict, the United States once again finds itself rebuilding a failed state, a process that has occurred with disturbing regularity since the end of the Cold War. In spite of the declaration that “major combat operations” have ended, it is clear that the struggle in Iraq will not be over for some time. Since the president triumphantly spoke to the nation onboard the USS Abraham Lincoln, 132 additional American soldiers have lost their lives.

Nearly two weeks ago, 17 people were killed by a car bomb at the Jordanian embassy, and riots broke out around Basra over fuel shortages. This is just an example of another bad week in a series of bad months for the U.S. administrators of the country. The recent bombing of the UN compound in Baghdad, which killed 20 and wounded 100, has awakened much of the world to the reality that the current top-down state building approach is doomed. Whether terror originates from Ansar al Islam, the local branch of al-Qaeda, or disgruntled members of the Ba’ath Party, these murderous groups will continue to flourish until the Iraqi people are made true stakeholders in their future. The writing has been on the wall, and until the U.S. reads it, expect horrific episodes like this to dominate the front pages.

Ambassador L. Paul Bremer said in a recent news conference, “Freedom matters, it is important to remember this ... and remind ourselves of the range of rights that Iraqis enjoy today because of

the coalition’s military victory.” What Bremer fails to recognize is that while the Iraqi people are free, they do not own their newfound freedom.

If we are to salvage this increasingly dire situation, the administration must not succumb to the tired pattern of state building pursued by both the first Bush and the Clinton administrations following the failure of central government in Somalia, Haiti, and the former Yugoslavia. In every case, Washington tried to re-impose central control without assessing why there was a collapse of top-down authority. Instead, the Bush administration must pursue a model that recognizes the unique political realities in the country—realities that call for a looser governmental structure.

Rhetoric and Reality

On Feb. 26, 2003, President Bush said,

The United States has no intention of determining the precise form of Iraq’s new government. That choice belongs to the Iraqi people. Yet, we will ensure that one brutal dictator is not replaced by another. All Iraqis must have a voice in the new government, and all citizens must have their rights protected.

The administration should continue to seek an optimal political outcome, but it must allow the Iraqi people to reach their own political decisions. Ignoring this reality risks the classic “imperial trap” that succeeds only in cre-

ating illegitimate winners and vengeful losers. For if the U.S. is seen to impose a political solution on the Iraqis, any subsequent government would be viewed as an American puppet. We would then be faced with two very unpalatable policy options: staying indefinitely to bolster an unpopular government or leaving and watching the imposed regime be replaced by a radical nationalist intent on developing nuclear weapons. Empire or failure: an autocratic approach will yield one or the other.

There are those who argue that Iraq’s U.S.-appointed Governing Council is the first step in this complex evolution. Its recent progress in the creation of a constitutional committee has come to the delight of many in the administration, but it has moved at far too slow a pace in turning over genuine political power to Iraqis. For at the end of the day, it is not the administration that will be living in Iraq. The able servant Mr. Bremer has acknowledged the importance of self-governance, but actions have yet to match rhetoric. Washington’s anointing of 22 men and women as Iraq’s “representatives” in the Governing Council damages the credibility of the process and places the onus on any future government to prove its independence from the United States.

The best hope for sustainability is the immediate pursuit of a decentralized confederal system. With Iraq’s streets still unsafe, unemployment mounting, a black market thriving, and basic services lacking, restoring order—much less a viable self-sustaining government—remains a difficult proposition. But we are obliged to attempt it, and under the circumstances, a decentralized confederal system is the most plausible blueprint for Iraq’s future.

A Workable Model: The Confederal System

Iraq, which the Ottoman Empire divided into three provinces based on the regional primacies of the Kurds, Sunnis, and Shi'ites, was united into a state in the interest of British bureaucratic simplicity. It is not a cohesive nation in the Western sense. The Sunni Arab elite has historically treated the more numerous Shi'ites and Kurds as second-class citizens, enriching themselves at the majority's expense. The challenge is to establish a system that offers the leaders of each group a large degree of local autonomy and a fair share in the country's resources.

To ensure that power is devolved to the lowest possible level and that centralized power is diluted in recognition of the primacy of the regions, the Iraqi people should develop their own version of America's Great Compromise. Struck during the Constitutional Convention of 1787, this agreement called for representation based on both the number of states—the Senate—and overall population—the House of Representatives—so that larger states enjoy political strength and smaller states have an effective check over their more populous neighbors.

THE IRAQI PEOPLE SHOULD DEVELOP THEIR OWN VERSION OF AMERICA'S GREAT COMPROMISE.

Such a solution suits the conditions in Iraq. The legislature should have an upper chamber in which power is evenly distributed among the three regions, with representatives of the chamber parceled out equally by sub-national grouping; the lower chamber's members should be elected based on overall population.

The administration should persuade the leaders of Iraq's Sunni Arabs, Shi'ite Arabs, and Kurds that this confederal system is the best means of assuring local

autonomy, protecting against the return of a tyrannical central government, and assuring them an equitable share in the disbursement of Iraq's oil and tax revenues. Rebuilding the country along decentralized lines would leave fewer opportunities for the central government to finance and undertake a threatening military buildup and menace its neighbors. At the same time, such a system would be cohesive and legitimate enough to guarantee Iraq's territorial integrity. Each of Iraq's major groups wants something different from a post-Saddam political settlement. The good news is that a loose confederation can accommodate their most essential interests.

Benefits for the Kurds

The traditional homeland of the Kurds, who constitute around 20 percent of the total population of Iraq, contains about 15 percent of the country's proven oil reserves. But under Saddam, the Kurds shared proportionately little of Iraq's immense oil wealth. A confederal system would give them a greater share of oil revenues, as well as a constitutional guarantee of regional self-government and a voice in the national government.

Such benefits would prove far more attractive than the temporary, and tenuous, economic gains they had received as the middlemen in the smuggling trade between Baghdad and Turkey.

Using Iraq's 2001 total revenue on oil products of \$21.16 billion, for example, and splitting revenues from an 8 percent overall tax on petroleum products so that 30 percent goes to the national government and 70 percent to the three major ethnic groups, would mean the Kurds

would receive \$462 million, which they could use to reconstruct their ravaged region. The United States must impress upon the Kurdish leaders that this mammoth economic consideration, which suits both their interests and those of the United States, is theirs to gain by advocating a decentralized confederal system.

In return for these monetary benefits, the Bush administration should insist that the Kurds abandon their dreams of an independent Kurdistan. Such a separatist state would destabilize postwar Iraq and could serve as a powerful magnet, polarizing many of Turkey's 10 million Kurds and possibly re-igniting a bloody separatist war in eastern Turkey. Thus, an independent Kurdistan would also undermine America's most important ally in the region.

Benefits for the Sunni Arabs

Iraq's Sunni Arab minority has long dominated the state and controlled its disbursement of oil revenues, even though the predominantly Sunni central region accounts for little of Iraq's oil reserves. As Saddam and much of his power elite come from the region near his home village, Tikrit, which is located in the center of the country, the Sunni Arabs are the most pro-Saddam and the least amenable to a new postwar government.

Nevertheless, the administration should stress the tangible rewards that the Sunnis would receive for agreeing to a new political settlement. First, the United States would help them rebuild Baghdad, where the new government would take up residence. Second, in a loose confederation, with taxation of oil revenue occurring at the national as well as regional levels, the Sunnis will guarantee themselves economic stability, despite their own relative lack of oil reserves. Third, by acquiescing in such a settlement, the Sunnis can hasten the end of the occupation of Iraq.

Benefits for the Shi'ite Arabs

The Shi'ite Arabs probably have the most to gain from this post-Saddam political settlement. Although they account for the majority of the population of Iraq and form the predominant group in the southern oil fields that provide the bulk of Iraq's oil production, the Shi'ites have had almost no say in how Iraq is governed or in the distribution of oil revenues.

Unlike the Kurds who gained considerable autonomy, the Shi'ites continued to suffer under Saddam's repressive rule. Iran's brand of radical Islamic revolution has considerably less appeal for Shi'ites in Iraq, who see the growing political, economic, and social problems that the aging ayatollahs are unwilling or unable to address in Iran. For example, Iraqi Shi'ites spurned the calls of Iran's Shi'ite ayatollahs to rise up against Saddam during the Iran-Iraq war, even when the Iranians appeared to be winning the conflict. Washington has an opportunity to anchor the Shi'ites within a revived post-Saddam Iraq by stressing the political inducements and economic benefits that a decentralized system could bring the south. By embracing a confederal solution for Iraq, the Shi'ites will for the first time gain genuine political representation in Baghdad, receive a large economic boost from the income generated by local taxation of their oil reserves, and enjoy a large degree of local autonomy.

Representation for the Stakeholders

A loose confederal approach based on the Great Compromise model has the advantage of making each of Iraq's major sub-national groups stakeholders in the final constitutional settlement. All three will find themselves with local political autonomy but without the threat of repression from the central government; each region within this confederal system would receive an

equitable distribution of Iraq's immense oil reserves, sufficient to reconstruct its geographical stronghold. And each group will be part of Iraqi national decision-making. This newfound stability will enable Iraq to provide security for its people without threatening its neighbors. But in the end, it will be up to the Iraqis themselves to establish their government. They must take ownership of the constitutional outcomes for their respective polities rather than hide behind the notion of an American or UN *diktat*, as so often happened under the vague nation building policies of the Clinton administration.

In fact, the approach recommended in this article differs dramatically from the cookie-cutter approach that is commonly known as nation building. While

there are many moral and practical flaws to that approach, perhaps its greatest failing is that it ignores the facts on the ground. The world is a diverse place, and local political, economic, ethnic, religious, and cultural conditions can vary so greatly that a simplistic Western-imposed edict that ignores these realities will be doomed to failure. It is imperative the Bush administration remember this as it grapples with the difficult days ahead. ■

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Mission Aborted

The failed Dutch invasion of Poland

By Michael S. Rose

FEW WILL FIND this surprising, but not everyone is applauding Poland's recent admission to the European Union, which will take effect next year. One commentator posed this provocative question on a British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Sunday morning religion program: what will the Dutch do when thousands of Poles, "every one of them more Catholic than the Pope," reach the shores of the promised lowlands looking for work? The question was ironic given that just a few days later the Dutch invaded the shores of Poland. Allow me to explain.

For the first half of this year (and well before) Poland was engaged in a spirited debate about the desirability of joining the European Union. Some conservative Poles, led by the influential Radio Marya, campaigned against EU membership, fearing that Brussels would impose on Poland regulations concerning moral and religious issues, including mandatory liberalization of Poland's abortion restrictions. Though the Euroskeptics were often dismissed as paranoid on this issue, the European parliament did in fact float a resolution last year calling on all member states entering in 2004 fully to legalize abortion.

Poland, at the urging of the Catholic Church in the former Soviet-bloc country, successfully lobbied for a special provision, similar to one granted to Ireland, that safeguards the country's abortion laws against interference from Brussels—at least for the immediate future. But that's not all that's made Poles skep-

tical about assimilating into Europa. There's another proposal now drifting through the European parliament that's making Euroskeptic Poles seasick. This one promises to provide aid via the UN Population Fund to bring free abortions to women of developing nations, the latest form of western imperialism—in short, exporting the culture of death.

Critics from veteran EU countries, for their part, have been busy questioning Poland's "suitability" to join its privileged ranks but not so much on economic grounds. Rather, they were wary of the country's traditional leanings on moral issues. During Poland's Soviet era, abortion was available on demand and, in effect, used as a means of birth control. In 1993, Poland banned abortion, though it allows for certain exceptions such as in cases where the mother's life is endangered or when pregnancy is a result of rape or incest.

Above all, Poland's critics accuse the country—both its government and its culture—of being too much under the influence of traditional Christianity, primarily via the Catholic Church. Consider this telling comment from Clare Murphy of London's BBC: "Here [in Poland], the Catholic Church, which had stood as a symbol of opposition under communism, rose high on a wave of popularity in the early 1990s and managed to push its aggressively anti-abortion, anti-contraception stance onto the mainstream political agenda." Critics like Murphy would much prefer to see the homeland of John Paul II evolve into a liberal, secu-

lar state adrift in a moral morass like, say, the United Kingdom or the Netherlands.

Enter Women on Waves. The Dutch abortion advocacy group operates the world's only floating abortion clinic. Run out of a converted East German tugboat called the *Langenort*, the abortion ship's millennium ministry seeks to spread its doctrine of "free abortions" throughout Europe. According to Dr. Rebecca Gomperts, a former Greenpeace activist who heads the group of seafaring abortion campaigners, Women on Waves performs its missionary function by sailing to countries where abortion is illegal in order to offer "early medical abortions."

This summer, just two weeks after the Polish referendum sent the country sailing Brussels-bound, Women on Waves sent forth the *Langenort* to proselytize the Poles by dropping anchor at the Baltic seaport of Wladyslawowo. Some astute observers commented that sending the abortion ship to the shores of Poland smacked of patronizing neo-colonialism.

The Dutch abortion ship, staffed with a female crew and captain, was designed to circumnavigate Polish law by enticing pregnant mothers to book passage on what Women on Waves calls a "sexual workshop cruise." Even after weeks of intense recruitment by the Dutch liberators, only 11 Polish women answered the call. (Women on Waves claimed that Polish women were just dying to abort their children.) The Polish women were taken 12 miles out to sea into international waters where Dutch law then took

effect. (Holland has the most permissive laws on a wide range of social issues, including abortion, of all EU nations.) Moored and bobbing in the Baltic, the women were given RU-486 in order to induce spontaneous abortions of their unwanted children—all this said to be licensed by the Dutch Health Ministry.

Though Women on Waves was angling for a major publicity stunt that would shame the Polish government in front of its future EU sister nations, the Dutch abortion ship's efforts were overshadowed by a series of sometimes comic mishaps. First, on its way across the Baltic, the tugboat had to contend with Mother Nature who seemed content to harass the Dutch abortion zealots not a little. Stormy seas kept the boat offshore, delaying its long-hyped arrival at the Polish fishing port.

When the *Langenort* finally made its initial approach to Wladyslawowo it was chased by playful Poles in a motor boat, an act that the sailing Dutchwomen found "intimidating" and "aggressive" but that most everyone else recognized as nothing short of farcical. Once at harbor, the *Langenort* failed to identify itself properly to Polish authorities. The harbormaster at Wladyslawowo accused the *Langenort* of disregarding his warnings and said that the crew aboard the abortion ship failed to abide by even the most basic laws. Docked illegally at Wladyslawowo, Women on Waves was fined \$3,150 for its rogue vessel.

The Dutch abortion ship made waves upon its arrival in other ways too. For one, the *Langenort* crew was greeted by police and customs officials who boarded the boat and sealed their stash of abortion pills in order to prevent their distribution in Poland, where they are illegal. More notably the *Langenort* was met at the quayside by 200 protesters who reportedly hailed the unwelcome vessel with red paint and eggs. (A few of the protestors, obviously with a sense of

humor, later released a bucketful of rodents onto the ship while it was docked at port.) Consequently, the Polish welcome wagon was vilified by mainstream European media outlets as "angry," "fierce," "irate," "outraged," "abusive," and "insulting." They were labeled "ultra-conservative" and "reactionary."

Given the extraordinary situation—after all, an unwelcome boat was launched from a foreign land to dock in Poland for the express purpose of subverting the country's laws—is their righteous indignation not understandable and justified, even healthy? Women on Waves unapologetically trumpeted their intentions across Europe even before the *Langenort* put to sea. Consequently, the Polish protestors saw the voyage for what it was: an invasion. After all, by their own admission, the Dutch abortion missionaries had arrived looking to put blood on their hands—Polish blood!

The visit by the *Langenort* also predictably angered Church leaders in the

Poland. The "Church exerts too much influence in Poland," she told reporters. "All I can hope for is that when we join the European Union we become a more secular society."

After Women on Wave's Polish mission was completed, Dr. Gomperts declared it a success, telling London's *Telegraph*, "[W]e have managed to put the abortion issue back on the political agenda [in Poland]." Margie Moore of the Feminist Majority Foundation, a U.S.-based abortion advocacy group, hailed the Polish mission an "historical voyage." She gleefully confirmed that a "licensed gynecologist and nurse from the Netherlands performed examinations on the [Polish] women and administered mifepristone (RU-486)," the result of which was the death of 11 unborn Polish babies.

Moore, who worked with *Langenort's* crew and abortion advocates in the Netherlands before the ship set sail for Poland, also assisted Women on Wave's 2001 seafaring abortion mission to Ire-

A BOAT WAS LAUNCHED FROM A FOREIGN LAND TO DOCK IN POLAND FOR THE EXPRESS PURPOSE OF SUBVERTING THE COUNTRY'S LAWS.

largely Catholic country. "We must not let criminals enter our territorial waters and perform crimes on our children," exhorted Archbishop Tadeusz Gocłowski of Gdansk during a Mass the week before the Dutch arrived. He described the boat crew's objective as "killing Poles."

Judging from its own propaganda, Women on Waves seems to have crafted its Polish campaign precisely to elicit strong reactions from Catholic leaders like Archbishop Gocłowski. Abortion advocate Wanda Nowicka, who helped facilitate the Dutch group's abortion mission to her native land, admitted to reporters that she believes the Catholic Church is exactly what's wrong with

land. "Unfortunately," the American abortion zealot lamented, "we weren't able to administer RU-486 to women in Ireland, so this [Polish voyage] is an historic occasion."

In an interview with London's *Guardian*, Bert Dorenbos of the Dutch pro-life group Cry for Life, summed up the situation this way: "In the past the Dutch have been missionaries for good, but now we are missionaries for evil." ■

Michael S. Rose is the author of four books including the New York Times best-seller Goodbye, Good Men. His latest book, Priest, was published this month by Sophia Institute Press.

[labour's heart of darkness]

The Strange Death of Dr. Kelly

The suicide of Britain's top weapons expert imperils the Blair government.

By Val MacQueen

DR. DAVID KELLY was recently buried in the churchyard less than a mile away from the leafy spot where his exsanguinated body was found deep in the Oxfordshire countryside. Less than a month ago, Britain's top weapons expert, 59-year-old Kelly, died by his own hand. Now, like the life ebbing from his slashed left wrist, the British public's faith, such as it is, seeps away from Prime Minister Tony Blair and spreads a dark stain on the Labour Party's body politic. The simile is apt because it is Dr. Kelly's death in suspicious circumstances that has delivered the *coup de grace* to Blair's dreams of an ever larger role for himself on the international stage.

Public confidence in Blair has been shattered by the string of events leading up to Dr. Kelly's being named as the Ministry of Defense's (MoD) non-attributable source for British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) reporter Andrew Gilligan's accusation that 10 Downing Street had demanded that the MoD "sex up" the dossier Blair was to present to Parliament as the imperative for going to war. Blair's chief of communications, Alastair Campbell, denied the accusations with his customary thuggish pugnacity and demanded to know the source. The BBC, quite rightly, refused. No. 10 became increasingly panicky, not

knowing whom to bully, and went into high-pitched spin mode. (This is the government one of whose most prominent press chiefs sent an e-mail round the Department of Transport on Sept. 11 reading with elegant simplicity: "This would be a good day to bury bad news.")

It has already been undeniably ascertained that the Blair dossier, with which he misled Parliament, the British public, and possibly the White House, had already been "sexed up" by Campbell, who had inserted chunks of a 12-year-old UCLA doctoral dissertation he found on the Internet. Despite the usual instant denials, reporters noted that Campbell's contribution contained the same errors of spelling and grammar as the dissertation's writer.

In this light, the *Telegraph* newspaper quotes the latest YouGov.com poll as demonstrating that almost two-thirds of the British electorate now believe the government has lost control. Sixty-one percent of those surveyed agreed that the government "was at the mercy of events," and 47 percent said they did not believe "a word Mr Blair said."

Tony Blair has never been seen as particularly admirable in Britain, despite the constant spin, and, indeed, many Britons are bemused by his popularity in America. Blair's motivation, in many

British eyes, has always been his own aggrandizement. During his recent lightning tour of Asia the former rock star wannabee and his wife Cherie were requested to "sing us a song!" by a Chinese university student in Beijing. Chinese students are not given to such bursts of individuality, especially when the room is full of Chinese secret service taking notes. Nevertheless, wealthy human-rights lawyer Cherie Blair belted out the Beatles' "When I'm 64," with Blair himself unable to resist joining in with vivacity for a later verse. This was two days after Dr. Kelly's body had been found.

Americans saw Blair's willingness, nay eagerness, to jump onto the Iraqi war bandwagon as loyalty to the United States. Britons saw it as his opportunity to strut a larger stage. Getting photographed getting on and off helicopters with the President of the United States has its charms and serves to remind European leaders that if and when they ever decide to appoint a President of Europe, well... Yet Blair and his wife are appeaseniks, both of them former rabid members of the Committee for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), not as idealistic teenagers but as married adults.

Blair has always been a limelight seeker from school plays to a failed rock

band, the presciently named Ugly Rumours. This is one reason he was such an effective international propagandist for the Bush administration. He's a performer. Magpie-like, his eye is caught by glitter. Tragically, this may be one reason for Dr. Kelly's descent into the darkness that is at the heart of the Labour Party. The MoD's evidence was too dull for Blair. Blair and his alter ego, Alastair Campbell, who exercises an eerie psychological dominance over him, wanted a thunderclap to convince Parliament of the need to go to war. There wasn't one available, but the truth has never presented an insurmountable obstacle to Blair's ambitions. The MoD had presented a truthful, impartial dossier, but Blair had to shoehorn it into stiletto heels and slap stage make-up and a big wig onto it. Hence Alastair Campbell's already doctored dossier was additionally tarted up with the uncorroborated factoid that Saddam had the means to deliver WMD to Britain within 45 minutes. It was this 45-minute figure that convinced Parliament and the British public that war was the only conceivable course and lent *gravitas* to America's urgency. It was, of course, sheer dramatic fantasy.

Defense departments and intelligence services worldwide employ various informal methods to get word out when they feel the need. Press officers are by no means always the favored method. Dr. Kelly was cleared to talk occasionally to prominent journalists. His interest was the truth, clarifying the science for the lay reporter. His meeting with the BBC's Andrew Gilligan at London's Charing Cross Hotel was no different. Gilligan protected his source. Traitorously, the Ministry of Defense, having promised his identity would not be revealed, did a *volte face*—on the orders of none other than the Secretary of Defense himself, Geoff Hoon. How peculiar. There is no way a British cabinet member would have dared take it

upon himself to do such a public deed, in the middle of a national scandal, without an order from No. 10.

Why, after Dr. Kelly's death, did Downing Street constantly present him as a middle-ranking "technical officer," saying that he had no access to the intelligence included in Alastair Campbell's dossier? To discredit the weight of his scientific opinions? To send a message to the White House not to pay any attention to Dr. Kelly because he was not of a ranking to be involved in the report?

Andrew Gilligan, who broke the "45-minute delivery" story for the BBC, protected his source even after Dr. Kelly's death, although the BBC eventually confirmed it in an attempt to dampen the acrid smell of conspiracy. That atmosphere may have been tamped down, but it is not quenched in Britain, where the Hutton Inquiry, which began in earnest on Aug. 11, promises further revelations. And meanwhile, journalist Andrew Gilligan, fearing that he had unleashed uncontrollable forces, was said at one point to be under suicide watch himself.

Geoff Hoon, it is being bruited about, will resign soon. But the British public is braying for a bigger sacrifice. The big beast: Alastair Campbell himself. Camp-

This should afford no comfort to Blair.

And still the spin surges on unabated, with the prime minister's chief press secretary Tom Kelley (no relation) giving a not-for-attribution briefing recently in which he claimed that Dr. Kelly was "a bit of a Walter Mitty character." This was so bizarre that the journalist, to his credit, bravely broke faith with the press secretary and revealed the quote and the source in his article. The British public reacted as though it had been thumped in the stomach. To compare one of the world's most respected microbiologists, Britain's top weapons expert, a Nobel Peace Prize nominee, a man of irreproachable reputation—and a man whose body still lay on the embalming table—with the fantasist figure of Walter Mitty revealed the urgent appetite of the Blair government for a hasty cover-up.

Tom Kelly publicly apologized to Dr. Kelly's widow, saying he had understood the briefing to have been confidential. This, of course, as the entire press corps from radical Left to Right of center immediately pointed out angrily, failed to address the main issue of why such a grotesque statement was made in the first place.

CAMPBELL WRITES THE SCRIPTS. CAMPBELL PROVIDES THE STAGE DIRECTIONS. CAMPBELL DECIDES THE COSTUMES. TONY IS THE ACTOR.

bell writes the scripts. Campbell provides the stage directions. Campbell decides the costumes. Tony is the actor. Without Campbell, the curiously insubstantial Blair will find himself without a sharply etched presence on the world stage. Campbell will go on to type up the thousands of pages of meticulously recorded shorthand notes (he is a former tabloid journalist) that make up his diary of his years at Tony Blair's side.

On Aug. 2, newspapers reported that some employees at the Ministry of Defense had been found trying to burn a trash bag filled with papers that later turned out to be the Ministry's media plan for dealing with the suicide of Dr. Kelly. Why?

Is this, the biggest political scandal in Britain for 50 years, grave enough to bring down Tony Blair? The majority of Labour MPs are peaceniks and were

only reluctantly convinced of the need to go to war by the inclusion of the "sexed up" 45-minute delivery warning. Further revelations will come from the Hutton Inquiry. With 409 seats in the Commons against the Conservatives' 163, Labour has a hefty majority, but anger at having been persuaded by lies to compromise their pacific principles could cause support for Blair to turn to savage revenge. If the Tories sense discontent surging to a high enough voltage, they can table a motion of No Confidence in the expectation that many Labourites will support it. If enough do vote with the Tories, Blair will cease to be the prime minister. Even if he squeaked through, his authority would be severely damaged.

Blair was told of Dr. Kelly's death somewhere over the Pacific at the start of his Asian tour. Journalists traveling with him all noted that he turned ashen at the news; clearly, he knew who Dr. Kelly was. Blair ignored calls from the opposition party to cancel his tour and recall Parliament from its summer recess, saying only that he was authorizing an inquiry to be headed by Lord Hutton. Lord Hutton, a law lord and no shrinking violet, immediately announced that the hearings would be open and televised. At the end of his tour, Blair had been back in the country all of one day when it was announced that the inquiry would not, after all, be televised. Evidence will be given behind closed doors.

Meanwhile, with 59-year old Kelly dead, and not yet buried, troupers Blair and his wife were enjoying the limelight, belting out "When I'm 64" to a group of students in Beijing. Ironical, really. Dr. Kelly will never be 64. Which leaves many an inquiring mind wondering, who, exactly, was the fantasist in all this? ■

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The Malay Dilemma

A newly prosperous nation faces Islamic fundamentalism.

By Scott McConnell

THE DAYLONG FLIGHT was tolerable in business class, with legroom and hostesses to fuss over us. We were a small group of conservative Washington types, guests of Malaysia's Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS), on a week's journey to Kuala Lumpur and a resort at Langkawi. Prior to the trip, I knew nothing about the country, and a visit to Kramerbooks, the well-stocked Dupont Circle bookstore, proved no help.

The new KL airport, glistening with international-brand shops, immediately brought home that the Third World isn't what it used to be. The capital city contains the world's tallest buildings, with the poor hardly visible. (I never found how the government keeps the very poor from begging in the city center.) The affluence and energy of a new urban middle class was striking. Near our hotel was a mall to rival anything in the U.S., frequented by thousands who were buying, not window shopping. Consumerism is no sign of spiritual health, but one felt that Malaysia's new middle class felt a genuine sense of national accomplishment.

Forty-three years ago, Malaysia lagged behind Haiti in *per capita* income; since then it has grown an average of 7 percent annually and would rank third in *per capita* wealth in the Western Hemisphere. By almost any standard, its growth is outstanding. Given what the country was able to overcome—the deadly Malay-Chinese race riots in 1969, continued muted ethnic divisions, the

lack of a democratic tradition, a prior dependence on extractive industries—Malaysia is one of the great international success stories of the past generation.

During most of that time, it has been led, in a semi-democratic, partially autocratic fashion, by Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad, known (or perhaps notorious) for his rhetorical sallies against an American-dominated globalization. Throughout his tenure Mahathir has (occasionally) postponed elections and jailed opponents, and reading the tepid Malaysian press one misses the First Amendment. On the other hand, he has addressed with genuine candor some of the country's toughest political questions. Mahathir's first book *The Malay Dilemma*—first published in the wake of the 1969 riots—is an astonishing document for any politician to have written, notable for its politically incorrect but telling analysis of the gap between the indigenous Malays and the country's substantial Chinese minority.

Perhaps only a Malay leader could write that in "early Malaya, no great exertion or ingenuity was required to obtain food. ... Under these conditions every one survived. Even the weakest and least diligent were able to live in comparative comfort, to marry, to procreate ... the hot humid climate is not conducive to either vigorous work or even to mental activity." In any case, the British colonial administration encouraged Chinese (and Indian) immigration—in great part because they could

not get Malays to work hard in the tin mines. But the new immigrants changed the country completely. Wrote Mahathir, "[W]hatever the Malays could do, the Chinese could do better ... before long the industrious and determined immigrants had displaced Malays in petty trading and all branches of skilled work."

It has been Mahathir's great accomplishment to create a sense of balance and accommodation between the Malays and the 25-30 percent Chinese and 10 percent Indian minorities. Modern Malaysia has been built with an elaborate affirmative-action and quota system that requires businesses over a certain size to have Malay partners and reserves 45 percent of the spots in the public university for Malays. It hardly works seamlessly, but clearly a Malay technocratic governing class has been created, which oversees a fairly transparent and accessible legal system and state bureaucracy. There is an official multiculturalism of the smiling-Malaysians-of-every-race-striding-forward-together sort.

If the educational gaps between Chinese and Malays have been finessed, it is not clear that religious tensions won't unravel the national fabric. Unlike the Chinese and most of the Indians, Malays are Muslim, a legacy of Arab traders who reached the peninsula five centuries ago. But Islam is now the principal source of opposition to the delicate balance Mahathir has fostered. As all Malaysians we met were quick to tell us, theirs is an "Islamic country" and supportive of "fundamentalist" Islam—but of course opposed to "extremist" Islam.

But what are the boundaries of "extremist"? I have never felt such limits in my own imagination as when standing next to a Muslim couple waiting for the elevator in our hotel lobby. The man was dressed like tourists everywhere, the woman in a black robe, head to toe, black head scarf, opaque black veil, only

slits for her eyes to see. One has no idea what this spectral creature might be thinking, of you, or of the Chinese girl standing on her other side in the skimpiest of hot pants. One strains for a snatch of conversation, a tone of voice that might give some clue. Actually, she is laughing sweetly, talking to her husband. For our encounter with Islam, we need, at the very least, a new Dostoevsky or Flaubert, but of course there isn't one.

The Islamic party (PAS) is growing in Malaysia, the majority party in two of the 13 states. One of our ISIS hosts (a Chinese historian, trained in the United States) told us that young Malays want to go to Pakistan to study who knows what, instead of to America or Britain to study engineering or business. Obviously this poses a long-term threat to the modern, religiously moderate, rather cosmopolitan trading state that Malaysia has become.

Our schedule was jammed with meetings—with police officials, with government officials, with bank officials, with the American ambassador, the Chamber of Commerce, the assistant prime minister, with human-rights groups, with the "Sisters in Islam" (a group of "progressive" Muslim women who argue that polygamy and wife-beating are not sanctioned by the Koran). We were groggy with jet lag, hardly able to respond to the exquisite politeness of the Malaysians—which didn't stop efforts at political advocacy. One of our group pressed our hosts on the question of whether the crime rate (low by American standards) would be lower still if all Malaysians were permitted to own firearms.

Perhaps our most interesting event was dinner with "Young Malaysians"—an elite group of young men in their 30s, working as attorneys, aides to government ministers, journalists, researchers. To my delight, our hosts soon began interrogating us about the "neoconserv-

atives," about whom they had been reading much in the Western press. Opposition to the Iraq war and to America's Mideast policies was unanimous among the Malaysians we met—probably driven most of all by the sense that our approach poured kerosene on the latent divisions in their own country. As one Malaysian diplomat explained to me (in reference to the Israel-Palestine conflict), moderate Muslims desperately need arguments to prove the West's fairness and good faith for their own showdown with Islamic extremists.

It's not only a Malaysian tune. We hadn't expected condemnation of American foreign policy from the businessmen we met for a luncheon at the American Chamber of Commerce, but we got an earful. A Boeing exec said, with surprising bluntness, that Bush's foreign policy was killing American business in Asia—he stressed particularly the need to do something about the "Palestine problem." Everyone at the table agreed, and we registered a not unsurprising fact about the global village: the conflict in the Holy Land resonates strongly at a distance of 10,000 miles.

Americans living outside the U.S. are keen monitors of the growing global dismay at the conduct of "the world's only superpower," and one wishes they had a bit more nerve in expressing themselves.

The power gap between Washington and Kuala Lumpur is so vast that one can see how Americans might conclude that concerns from the likes of Malaysia can be safely discounted. That's not a sentiment any of our group felt after a week there. More the opposite: that the fate of such middling countries—no longer poor, not yet rich, increasingly well-educated, vital as allies if Islamic terrorism is to be isolated and contained, and bellwethers of global opinion—will count heavily in the politics of the new century. ■

Old Europe's Obit

A Greyhound traveler's dirge for the Dutch

By Razib Khan

FEW VENUES RIVAL a Greyhound station's odds for meeting peculiar individuals. Recently I was homeward bound after a nationwide trek when I chanced upon one of them at Portland, Oregon's bus terminal. My final destination was a small town, a few miles north of the California border, and I was already bracing myself to endure the final hours of my journey beside an unwashed and garrulous traveler, as inevitably happens to me on bus trips. But my peculiar acquaintance of this trip proved instead to be singular for his conventional hygiene and intelligent conversation.

David was a Dutch student midway through a West Coast tour begun in Vancouver with a vague final destination in Mexico, making landfall in the major cities along the I-5 corridor. Fluent in English, Spanish, French, German, Attic Greek, and Latin in addition to his native Dutch, he turned out to be a sharp and engaging philosophy student. Not your typical Greyhound patron, so I took the initiative to suggest we sit together, and to my relief, he assented, no doubt noting the gleam of normalcy in my eyes and taking my full complement of teeth to be a good sign.

As we settled into our seats and the bus left the terminal, rolling south through the bronzing landscape of the Oregon summer, I was able to offer him yet another pleasant surprise. Thanks to a subscription to the *Economist*, I was well informed about the minutiae of Dutch politics, and I believe I positively shocked him when I eagerly brought up the late Pim Fortuyn and his premature

passing from the scene. It emerged that David had worked as an activist for the Pim Fortuyn List when he first entered university. But at 20, he was already jaded, having witnessed Professor Pim's voice snuffed out by violent means from the compassionate Left, then the fratricidal sniping within the List, and finally what he perceived to be only token cosmetic acknowledgements of the validity of Fortuyn's platform by the ruling Christian Democrats. David was no doubt surprised that as a brown-skinned immigrant to the U.S., I would be so enamored of a man portrayed as a reactionary by the mainstream press outside the Netherlands. But to my mind, Fortuyn fought to preserve the liberalism that has characterized Dutch society since its revolt against Spanish tyranny. Fortuyn's genius was in part goading Muslim notables into being candid about their true feelings about the culture that gave rise to the social liberties that they so eagerly took advantage of.

Alas, this is a gloomy tale and not one of hope. David saw a dark future ahead for the Dutch nation, and moreover for Europe as a civilization. He told me what I had only read of: the prevalence of immigrants in the prisons, on the dole, and in the streets, as if this was the norm for any immigrant to the Netherlands. He described young activists, Dutch by birth, campaigning to make Arabic an official language and elevate the Islamic faith to the same status as the Reformed and Catholic Churches. He recalled walking through Rotterdam for hours without seeing another white person.

Of course the Netherlands has had immigrants for centuries. From Jews fleeing Iberia's Catholic monarchs to Protestants escaping Queen Mary's England, it has opened its arms to foreign peoples so long as industry and commerce were served. David pointed out that even today, non-white groups like the Ambonese from Indonesia or Hindus from Suriname have a place in Dutch society, different from "natives," but accepted in some measure. But Muslim groups, like the Moroccans, bent on traditional continuance of the "old ways" in the heart of European hedonism are less easily assimilated into Dutch pluralism. Though less than 5 percent of the overall population, they are concentrated in port cities like Rotterdam, making their presence felt and asserting their right to practice a feudal lifestyle in a post-industrial society. It is not the freedom to engage in commerce and industry that draws them but a generous welfare state and asylum laws ripe for abuse.

Our conversation descended further into pessimism as David admitted that in his years at university he had encountered only one fellow student of Moroccan heritage. "They can never be Dutch after all," he insisted offhandedly. And yet onward the march of demographics continues, as one nation turns into another. David foresees a day when Europeans flee their sinking fortress for North America, the young leaving the aged to the tender mercies of the new inheritors of the continent. I suspect huddling masses of flaxen-haired men and women from the shores of the North Sea were hardly the "wretched refuse" Emma Lazarus had in mind, teeming though those shores may have become. ■

Razib Khan runs the blog gnxp.com.

Arts & Letters

FILM

[*American Splendor*]

The Marginal Celebrity

By Steve Sailer

STUDIOS PREFER MOVIES like "Bad Boys II" that require few words to describe ("Things go Boom!"), while we critics favor films like "American Splendor" that need lots of words to explain, especially when one of those words is "postmodern." The irony is that "American Splendor" is a much more enjoyable film to watch than to read about.

So, what is "American Splendor"? It's not, as I had feared, the sequel to "American Beauty." Instead, it's an interwoven combination of documentary, biopic, and animation about a prickly, semi-employable Cleveland hipster named Harvey Pekar.

Born in 1939, Pekar bounced from crummy job to crummy job while writing jazz reviews in his spare time. Finally, he got himself a lifetime civil-service sinecure as a file clerk at a Veterans Administration hospital. He decided in 1976 that his daily life deserved to be immortalized in a series of underground comic books he called "American Splendor."

That Pekar can't draw anything besides stick figures didn't slow him down. He simply got his old pal R. Crumb, the "Keep on Truckin'" cartoonist, to illustrate what Crumb accurately calls Pekar's "staggeringly mundane" life. A marginal celebrityhood ensued, capped by a numerous appearances on the Letterman Show and now this film.

In the movie, the real Pekar is shown commenting on Paul Giamatti's fine performance as Pekar as he writes his comic books commenting on his life. And now I'm commenting on all that commentary. Whee! Ain't we postmodern?

Actually, this contemporary tendency toward commentaries piled upon commentaries seems more like a medieval throwback. Thirteenth-century Churchmen and Talmudic scholars would have understood the 21st century filmmakers' urge to say rather than show.

Over the last few years, voiceovers and other techniques borrowed from documentaries have become ever more common in feature films, such as the grating pseudo-Ken Burns interludes in "Seabiscuit." Fortunately, the husband-wife team of documentarists behind "American Splendor," Shari Springer Berman and Robert Pulcini, know how to use their bag of nonfiction tricks to keep this film lively without distracting the audience with their cleverness.

Giamatti, the dumpy-looking character actor whom you'll undoubtedly rec-

After admiring the film, I bought Pekar's own 1985 anthology of his comic books, figuring those would be even better. I was wrong.

It turns out that Berman and Pulcini are far more gifted than their subject. They've extracted the few moments of interest from Pekar's life and made them vivid.

As subject matter for dozens of comic books, however, Pekar's life story lacks only one element: incident. As a writer, he lacks only wit, insight, concision, and timing. His stories are like a phone call from a self-absorbed acquaintance who insists on methodically telling you every single thing he did today.

They're comic books, but there's none of the usual humor or heroism, just a grumpy fellow riding the bus and having banal "How was your weekend?" conversations with the folks at work, often winding up with some little life lesson like "As long as you got your health, things can't be all bad."

The joke is that there are no jokes. That wasn't a bad little joke back in 1976, but it got old in about 1977.

PEKAR'S LIFE STORY LACKS ONLY ONE ELEMENT: **INCIDENT**. AS A WRITER, HE LACKS ONLY **WIT, INSIGHT, CONCISION, AND TIMING**.

ognize from his many supporting roles, isn't particularly well-cast as Pekar—he's too hangdog Italian to capture fully Pekar's left-wing Jewish intellectual's edginess—but he gives Berman and Pulcini exactly what they want.

Interestingly, in real life Giamatti isn't at all the blue-collar schlub he usually portrays. A graduate of Choate and Yale, he's a prince of the new American meritocracy. His father, the Renaissance literature scholar A. Bartlett Giamatti, was president of Yale and the Commissioner of Baseball who banned Pete Rose.

The filmmakers shied away from showing what's most striking about Pekar—his bulletproof fascination with himself—in favor of a mildly bogus populist portrayal of him as a working-class hero.

"In the future, everybody will be famous for fifteen minutes," said Andy Warhol, who has been famous for saying that for 35 years now. In reality, we live in an age of laboriously created brand names, which can then be exploited for decades. Pekar, for example, has been slaving for 27 years to make himself famous.

In his introduction to Pekar's book, Crumb wrote, "Yeah, Harvey is an egomaniac, a classic case ... But how else could he have gotten all those comics published? ... Only an egomaniac would persist in the face of such odds. Believe me, I know from whence I speak, having been nagged and bullied plenty by him to get the work in."

The truly interesting thing about Pekar is that he's representative of so many talentless avant-gardists who somehow convince themselves that they have something upon which lots of other people ought to spend their precious time. ■

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BOOKS

[*The Dust of Empire: The Race for Mastery in the Asian Heartland*, Karl E. Meyer, *Public Affairs*, 252 pages]

Ignorant Imperialists

By David Gordon

KARL MEYER'S EXCELLENT book can be read on two levels. Central Asia for many people is a place of both mystery and attraction. Meyer aptly quotes James Elroy Flecker's lines, "For lust of knowing what should not be known, / We take the Golden Road to Samarkand," which epitomize this attitude. (Flecker's play *Hassan*, from which this comes, is largely forgotten today, but the great Shakespeare critic G. Wilson Knight thought highly of it.)

To those entranced by Central Asia, Meyer offers an abundance of material. Drawing from his thorough familiarity with the history of Russia, Iran, Pakistan, and the Caucasus, he is ever alert for the significant anecdote. One example must here suffice. In 1853, Hadji

Murad, the principal lieutenant of Imam Shamil's guerilla war in the Caucasus against Tsarist Russia, surrendered to the Russian governor, Prince Vorontsov. He offered to change sides and lead a force against his former allies. The Russians left him in suspense; when he realized that they had no intention of accepting his offer, he bolted. He was soon tracked down and killed. Meyer notes that Tolstoy wrote a short story about the incident, but "tactfully unmentioned was the epilogue: Hadji Murad's corpse was decapitated and his head embalmed, exhibited in a Tbilisi galley by Vorontsov and sent along as a *memento mori* to the tsar."

Meyer has given us much more than a collection of gripping stories. He writes to warn America against the dangerous path she appears to be following. Our unprecedented military and economic power allows us to "throw our weight around" in the classic fashion of the great 19th-century empires. Too often we have succumbed to the temptation to do so. Meyer wrote before the Bush administration's invasion of Iraq, in defiance of the wishes of nearly every nation in the world, but this exercise of the arrogance of power is a perfect example of what he has in mind.

Our author is among those optimists who think that we can learn from history. By study of imperialist ventures in Central Asia, he hopes, America can escape falling into a fatal error. "In a real sense, America now sits where Britain did in the 1890s, only the old empire is squared.

ples would happily change places with them. Hence the special shock of September 11."

The confident assertions of Paul Wolfowitz, William Kristol *et hoc genus omne* that the United States can cram American-style democracy down the throats of various foreign regimes exactly parallel remarks of British statesmen that now strike us as more than a little ridiculous. Lord Curzon called the British Empire "under Providence, the greatest instrument for good the world has seen." Lord Rosebury, a Liberal Prime Minister could not contain himself. Speaking of the Empire, he asked, "Do we not hail in this less the energy and fortune of a race than the supreme direction of the Almighty?"

Meyer has wisely drawn much of his material on this topic from the great work of the Harvard historian William L. Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism, 1890-1902*. When the book first appeared in 1935, Langer was a leading light among the revisionist historians who questioned America's participation in World War I. He wished to expose the follies of European power politics and imperialism.

Boasting of the sort to which Meyer has called attention, whether by British or American statesmen, may be foolish; but is it also a crime? Meyer argues that the assumption of superiority leads to action based on ignorance. Those who think themselves above all others are unlikely to pay attention to the essential facts needed to deal with other countries.

THOSE WHO THINK THEMSELVES ABOVE ALL OTHERS ARE UNLIKELY TO PAY ATTENTION TO THE ESSENTIAL FACTS NEEDED TO DEAL WITH OTHER COUNTRIES.

... The thesis of this book is that the moral and diplomatic dilemmas confronting Washington today differ in degree but not in kind from those that confronted Britain before World War I. In truth, Americans are if anything even more certain that their institutions are the envy and exemplar of less fortunate breeds, and that most of the world's peo-

Meyer has a definite view about the nature of these essential facts. He thinks that, in Central Asia at any rate, long-established local traditions rigidly constrain action by the great powers. A policy that ignores local history courts disaster. "Strip away the ideological verbiage and *au fond* one can detect a striking kinship between Lenin's heirs and

the British colossi of empire they otherwise excoriated. ... All sought to justify alien rule morally by pointing at improvements in the lives of natives. ... Unresolved was the dilemma of what to do when the goals of Russification and modernization conflicted, as they did time and again, with native beliefs and stubborn ethnicity."

Unfortunately, according to Meyer, the United States has often acted in precisely the condescending, ignorant fashion that has characterized earlier imperialisms. Meyer places great stress on the overthrow of the Mossadeq regime in Iran in 1953. Mossadeq, our author holds, was a liberal nationalist, favorably inclined to the United States. When he dared to nationalize the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, the CIA instigated a coup against him. America charged that Mossadeq was a tool of communism, but in fact the Iranian Communists opposed him. The unpopular Shah returned to power, under American sponsorship. But the attempt of the United States to impose its will culminated in the rise to power of the bitterly anti-American Ayatollah Khomeini.

Much depends on whether Meyer's account of Mossadeq is correct, and I should have liked a more detailed account of the accusations against him of communist sympathies. One detail that Meyer does not mention, though, strikes me as lending some support to his account. Robin Zaehner, an Oxford don who, Meyer notes, planned much of the anti-Mossadeq agitation, was himself later suspected by British Intelligence of being a communist agent. Like the enigmatic Roger Hollis, though, he never confessed. (Incidentally, Zaehner's *Concordant Discord* is one of the neglected masterworks of the 20th century.)

Meyer's view of Mossadeq is controversial, though based on careful scholarship and analysis; but his criticism of American policy in Afghanistan rests on obvious facts. In an effort to unhinge the Soviets, the United States gave military aid to radical Islamic groups. In doing so, the American government has

turned out to be among the principal sponsors of the terrorist organizations that so vex us today.

The policy of the United States in this instance perfectly fits the pattern that Meyer has called to our attention. Zbigniew Brzezinski and his colleagues in the Carter administration decided to channel all aid to the Afghan resistance through the government of Pakistan. "As soon became evident President [of Pakistan] Zia's military intelligence service had its own agenda ... once a friendly fundamentalist regime took root in Afghanistan the sword of Islam could be directed at Soviet Central Asia. ... The prime beneficiary of American aid among the seven resistance groups based in Peshawar was the faction led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, an Islamic extremist belonging to a new cohort, modern in knowledge, medieval in faith, known generically as the 'bearded engineer.'"

Blinded by their ideological preoccupations, the American policymakers neglected to study the forces that they provided with aid. Brzezinski himself, amazingly, continues to defend his assistance to the Islamic extremists. "For his part, and with enviable sangfroid, Brzezinski proffered this response to a French political weekly when asked if he regretted favoring extremist Muslims or training future terrorists: 'What was more important in world history? The Taliban or the fall of the Soviet empire? A few over-excited Islamists, or the liberation of Central Europe and the end of the Cold War?'"

The argument Brzezinski here deploys may be viewed as a direct response to Meyer's central contention. Even if I did not study the history of Central Asia, we may paraphrase him as saying, this does not matter. The results I achieved outweigh whatever bad effects you attribute to my ignorance. And perhaps I was not ignorant at all. I willingly took the risk of encouraging Islamic fanatics in order to bring down communism.

Does not this defense display that very arrogance Meyer is concerned to combat? Brzezinski concentrates only

on the goal that interests him, resistance to Russia's armed forces. Even after the disastrous results of aid to the Islamic extremists are everywhere apparent, he never thinks to ask whether the aid could have been distributed more carefully. Surely the policy that Meyer recommends, one of moderation, careful study, and action in conjunction with other nations, is likely to lead to better results than the bellicosity of Brzezinski and his successors in the Bush administration. Better still would be a return to a noninterventionist foreign policy, but that is another story. ■

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[The American Soul: Rediscovering the Wisdom of the Founders, Jacob Needleman, Tarcher, 377 pages]

Founders' Wisdom

By Arthur Versluis

EACH YEAR BRINGS a new harvest of books about the inexhaustible subject of the American founders: new biographies, new histories, new analyses of the Constitution and its applications to the present. But it is very rare to find a book whose author looks into the philosophical, moral, and spiritual significances of America and of being an American, a book whose author is interested more in inner life than in chronicling only outward history. Such a book is philosopher Jacob Needleman's remarkable achievement entitled *The American Soul: Rediscovering the Wisdom of the Founders*.

Why is Needleman's book excellent? First of all, it is well written and, though sometimes meandering, in the main well organized. In today's world of publishing, this alone makes *The American*

Soul stand out—as an editor and as a professor who for some years has taught writing, editing, and American studies in a department called “American Thought and Language,” I have come more and more to appreciate such qualities in writing. Secondly, Needleman’s book conveys a sense of openness and of genuine inquiry into American history and into what it really means to be an American. He has no polemical axes to grind here, still less any that he wields; rather, Needleman seeks to convey a sense of admiration not only for the American founders, but even more for the wisdom that they both admired and embodied.

Perhaps most important is that Needleman offers, in an engaging way, genuinely surprising insights into what it means to be American. While acknowledging that Americans have made mistakes, Needleman keeps his eyes firmly fixed on the larger question of what America (and Americans) can be, on the ideals that the founders embraced and that make America the first country based not only on the past, but also and even primarily on the future, on what we can become. One is born Greek or Japanese, he writes, but one becomes American. To be American, Needleman

argues, may have become synonymous with crass materialism to many around the world, but hidden within the outer crassness of America are spiritual values, central among which is to protect and to nurture “the possibility of the

of money or personal comfort or fame, but the cultivation of character and wisdom. Victimhood is based on one’s circumstances being governed by the past and by one’s history, but deeply rooted in the concept of “American” is the

IN NEEDLEMAN’S VIEW, AT THE HEART OF **AMERICAN VALUES** IS NOT THE LOVE OF MONEY OR PERSONAL COMFORT OR FAME, BUT THE **CULTIVATION OF CHARACTER AND WISDOM.**

inward search.” “Inward search” refers in part to the development of individual character and in part to spiritual life.

The American Soul is sometimes impressionistic, as when Needleman contemplates images of such figures as Washington or Jefferson, but these meditations on the visages and physiognomy of great American leaders in fact often provide unexpected glimpses into their characters. And Needleman emphasizes the importance of character and will in human life. He is deeply skeptical of those who encourage a sense of victimization in themselves or others because, in Needleman’s view, at the heart of American values is not the love

belief that one can develop a stronger personal character, that one can shape one’s own destiny, that one is not trapped but rather can rise above one’s immediate circumstances through strength of character.

As a philosopher, Needleman draws from the Bible, Plato, and Marcus Aurelius, as well as from the *Tao Te Ching* and from Emerson—he draws, in other words, from what he terms the often underground current of wisdom without which no civilization can long endure. He sees this current of wisdom as the “second history of civilization,” not like the “first history” of outward events that he likens to a raging river, but rather as the quiet hidden current of regenerative religious, cultural, and intellectual life. The American founders represent this lesser-remarked current of wisdom, and to it Needleman wishes to draw our attention. For a professor of philosophy today openly to espouse spiritual values and the pursuit of wisdom as central to our lives is rather rare, as even a cursory glance at much contemporary academic philosophical writing will quickly confirm. Needleman brings us back to the essence of philosophy: the love of wisdom.

There is also an unusual historical dimension to *The American Soul*, which emerges from Needleman’s concept of a “second democracy” inside mainstream American society. A “second democracy” is a somewhat esoteric community, sometimes not entirely visible to outsiders, that represents fundamental American values of independence, com-



“Our goal is to establish language that is gender-neutral, ethnic-neutral, and age-neutral while celebrating our spirit of diversity.”

munal spirit, and religious faith. Exemplary of Needleman's "second democracy" is Ephrata, in Pennsylvania, the small mystical semi-monastic Protestant community in the tradition of the great German mystic Jacob Böhme that, during the Revolutionary War, cared for Washington's wounded troops after the Battle of Brandywine. Ephrata, a voluntary spiritual community that created music, art, and a way of life that remains an American inspiration, exemplifies for Needleman the possibility of an inner American way of life that thrives in outward ways as well. I discussed Ephrata in several of my books, including *Wisdom's Children*, and I was delighted to see that too little-known community and its exceptional leader Conrad Beissel recognized by Needleman for their importance in American history.

The argument in *The American Soul* is in some respects past what has become known as the culture war. Needleman acknowledges where the United States has gone wrong and even committed genocide, but because he calls us toward mythic America, an America that exists to encourage and to protect the pursuit of wisdom, because he is skeptical of bureaucracy and centralized power, he certainly does not belong to the Left. Yet he is also skeptical of those who identify these United States solely with market capitalism, with the illusion that "man's life can be morally and materially perfected mainly through external changes involving, among other things, external forms of government and social order." For this same illusion fueled Marxist communism—and fuels "free trade" zealotry as well. Too easily we forget that when "the mind and heart are undeveloped or corrupt, no laws or economic system, however wisely conceived, can bring about the Good." Without the development of the soul, Needleman writes, political and economic liberty become hollow because they are not in themselves the aim of life. Without a rich inner life, life lived in the pursuit of materialism is an illusion and, "as the Psalm says, simply "come[s] to nothing."

The American Soul belongs in many respects to what I term the current of traditional conservatism. I don't mean that this is an ideological book—far from it—but rather that it belongs to that long tradition of works whose authors seek to conserve what is most important in our human inheritance, who extol those values traditionally deemed highest in human life. Conservatism as a term has become increasingly confusing, not least because for a time it lost its identification with the traditional desire to conserve and preserve what is highest and best in human life and instead became largely identified with a pro-corporate and materialistic ideology. *The American Soul* reminds us that there is something extraordinarily valuable that the *idea* of America protects, and that does not belong only to the realm of historical events or to material wealth.

Needleman is right when near the end of the book he warns that we must take care to remember and to treasure the higher values for which America stands. "A metaphysically empty America cannot endure," he argues. It may keep its armies for a while, it may keep its outward legal forms in some respects, but without "the inner resonance of its ideals and values, without the olive branch in its eagle claws," "without its American soul, America is sure to go nowhere, and if so, where will humanity go?" It is all too easy to become caught up in the vacuous rhetoric of empire, but an imperial America is bound to fall. What Needleman calls us toward—humility, peace, stability, mutual aid, community, kindness and wisdom, the ideals that George Washington called us toward in his prescient Farewell Address—are in the end the ways through which alone America as a great idea can truly be realized. ■

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[What's So Great About America, Dinesh D'Souza, Regnery, 256 pages]

Revolutionary Conservatism

By John Attarian

AMERICAN WORLD WAR II propaganda included a film series titled, "Why We Fight." With America fighting Islamic terrorism, neoconservative pundit Dinesh D'Souza, author of *Illiberal Education* and *The End of Racism*, proposes to offer an update of that series. But while making some valid points (e.g., that Islam is not a religion of peace), he reveals the vacuity and impiety of mainstream conservatism.

According to D'Souza, we ultimately fight for our country because of the nature of our society and the way of life it enables us to lead. So we must know the moral basis of our civilization and "what makes American life as it is lived today the best life that our world has to offer." (Italics his.) Only this will reveal the stakes in this war and "what we possess that is worth fighting for."

Muslims hate America, he argues, because it is an engine of modernization. "America is a subversive idea" that, given a chance, will unleash enormous social upheaval, and "produce a society unrecognizable from the one it destroyed." They are right, D'Souza chirps, "America is a subversive idea."

His goal is to see if this "subversive idea" deserves our "love and allegiance." As an Indian immigrant who arrived in 1978 and was naturalized in 1991, he deems himself uniquely qualified to do so and gifted with insights about what makes America great.

D'Souza makes superficially attractive but muddled rebuttals to multicultural attacks on the West and America. He debunks their "environmental school," which holds that location and natural resources produce cultures: why did the West's environmental advantages not

put it on top until recently? As for the claim that the West prospered by practicing robbery, ethnocentrism, colonialism, imperialism, and racism, D'Souza concedes the moral high ground to the enemy: "It must be granted" that if the West triumphed by theft, then it "should atone for its crimes and pay reparations to those it has robbed." Indeed, one could argue, "[S]ome form of violent retaliation against an unrepentant West is both understandable and justified." After that horrible surrender, his only recourse is to observe that non-Westerners were ethnocentric, imperialist, and racist too—and besides, we abolished slavery.

He attributes the West's triumph to its invention of science, democracy, and capitalism, which enabled it to dominate the planet. In fact, democracy deserves no credit for Western paramouncy; it certainly played no role in Western empire-building.

As for reparations, slavery was bad, but "the slaves are dead, and ... their descendants are better off as a result of slavery." That blacks are still behind is due, he says, to dysfunctional aspects of black behavior, e.g., illegitimacy. Then, like a liberal seeking "root causes," D'Souza concedes illogically that "slavery was primarily

responsible" for the 25 percent black illegitimacy rate in 1965.

But D'Souza reserves his most vicious attacks for those on his right. "Conservatism is generally the party of patriotism," but since the Reagan years ended, "patriotism on the Right has not been much in evidence." Why? Because many conservatives "are viscerally unhappy with the current state of American society," seeing it as licentious and depraved. He specifically indicts Jerry Falwell, Gary Bauer, Bill Bennett, Robert Bork, and Gertrude Himmelfarb—the clear implication being that because they have the bad manners to point out the glaringly obvious ugliness of "the best life that our world has to offer," they are not patriots. A "patriot," apparently, robotically babbles Panglossian bromides and makes his proper prostrations to democratic capitalism.

Worst of all, D'Souza's book is a profoundly unconservative celebration of modernity. Central to modernity is economism, the doctrine that man is a utilitarian animal and that life reduces to economics and appetite gratification. D'Souza's crass economism is blatant: "The moral triumph of America is that it has extended the benefits of comfort and affluence, traditionally enjoyed by

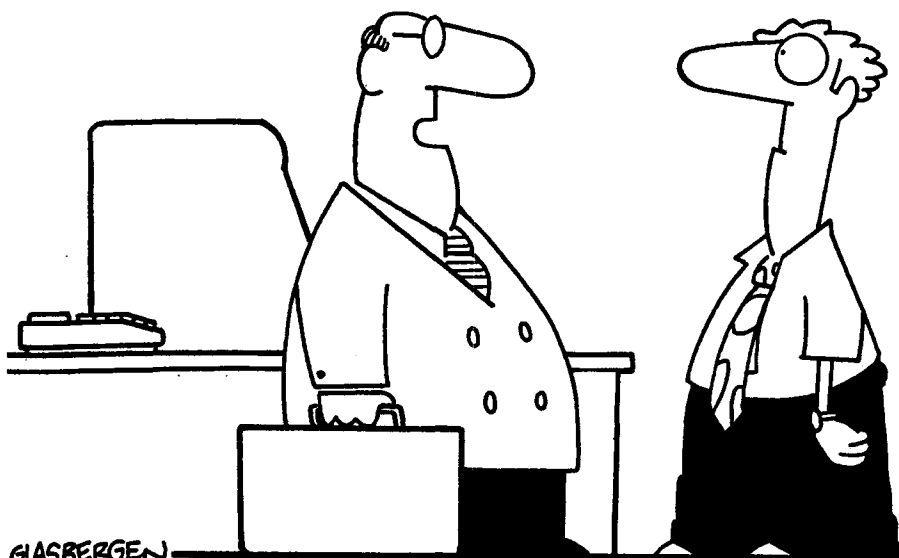
very few, to a large segment of society." That's where our greatness lies?

An even deeper evil of modernity is what conservative philosopher Richard Weaver called "impiety," an egotistical disrespect for anything beyond oneself, which is most evident, Weaver wrote, in "freely expressed contempt for the past." Impiety is D'Souza's deepest theme. In America, compared to life in a confining, traditional society, "you get to write the script of your own life. ... In America your destiny is not prescribed; it is constructed. Your life is like a blank sheet of paper, and you are the artist." This is what gives America "worldwide appeal ... the immigrant discovers that America permits him to break free of the constraints that have held him captive," so he can make his own future. America is so great, then, because you get to thumb your nose at the past, at constraints, at any received norms of conduct, and do it your way.

Tellingly, D'Souza's final chapter, "America the Beautiful: What We're Fighting For," takes as its epigraph Thomas Paine's famous statement, "We have it in our power to begin the world over again," a classic pronouncement of bumptious impiety—and opens with the flat assertion, "America represents a new way of being human and thus presents a radical challenge to the world."

One of modernity's greatest impieties is America's comprehensive transformation by mass immigration. An immigration enthusiast, D'Souza distinguishes "nativism, which is based on resentment, and patriotism, which is based on love. The former is objectionable ..." Teddy Roosevelt's declaration, "There is no room in this country for hyphenated Americans," D'Souza whines, "is too harsh, and makes unnecessary and unreasonable demands on immigrants."

Obviously, D'Souza's viewpoint and the conservatism of Edmund Burke, Irving Babbitt, Weaver, and Russell Kirk are mutually exclusive, and D'Souza lauds Jean Jacques Rousseau, of all people, for his notion of authenticity: the sovereign self making his own rules. America embraced authenticity in the '60s, and it



"As my assistant, your job will be to follow me around humming the 'Jaws' theme every time I enter a room."

is an ideal that "now helps to define what it means to be an American." For an immigrant dumping confining traditions, Rousseau's appeal is obvious.

So, naturally, D'Souza disdains cultural conservatives. In his neighborhood Starbucks he encountered an employee with Mohawk hair, nose ring, etc. "I could just imagine Judge Bork entering the room. His immediate reaction would

ica's critics. He proclaims, "American life as it *is lived today*" is "the best life that our world has to offer"—then concedes that much in American culture "is disgusting to normal sensibilities." He discloses his struggle to shelter his daughter from "toxic influences in American culture that threaten her innocence," and his fear that he may lose the battle. It doesn't add up, but he doesn't notice.

THESE ENTHUSIASTS FOR GLOBALIZATION, DEMOCRATIC CAPITALISM, OPEN IMMIGRATION, AND THE PERMANENT REVOLUTION OF MODERNITY ARE NOT CONSERVATIVES.

probably be 'Arrest that man.'" Because the "Starbucks guy" would ignore wiggings from Bork, cultural conservatives should accept the ideal of authenticity. Contrary to their fears, "the new morality is not simply a screen for self-indulgence and immorality." Scolding cultural conservatives for being "against freedom," D'Souza says they should "acknowledge the legitimacy of the ideal of authenticity" and try to steer self-expression in better directions.

D'Souza reveals how thoroughly modern conservatism's moneyed mouthpieces have repudiated Burkean conservatism. These enthusiasts for globalization, democratic capitalism, open immigration, and the permanent revolution of modernity are not conservatives. They are self-serving Jacobins, who have prospered mightily by lauding these impieties. (And it is irritating to have this Jacobin telling traditional conservatives what to do.)

If traditional societies are inferior, then what are conservatives trying to conserve? D'Souza's answer, clearly, is an arrangement that allows people like me to cut loose from the constraining past, do our own thing, make our pile, and find our place in the sun. This is what the mainstream Right's elites like about America.

Adding muddleheaded incompetence to impiety, D'Souza shuttles back and forth between overbearing braggadocio and self-debunking concessions to Amer-

His closing warning to America's enemies not to think we are soft drives home his incoherence. Much of America has embraced Rousseauian authenticity, he writes, but "sizable segments of the culture" have not. The Sept. 11 heroes—New York firemen and policemen, Todd Beamer and his fellow passengers—"showed that their lives were dedicated to something higher than 'self-fulfillment.'" The '60s generation is now appreciating "the indispensability of this older, sturdier culture of courage, nobility, and sacrifice. It is this culture that will protect the liberties of all Americans, including that of the Starbucks guy." America is "a new kind of society" producing "a new kind of human being. That human being—confident, self-reliant, tolerant, generous, future oriented—is a vast improvement over the wretched, servile, fatalistic, and intolerant human being that traditional societies have always produced, and that Islamic societies produce now."

It is mind-boggling how much self-contradiction D'Souza can pack into a short space and how blissfully unaware of it he is. Which is it? Are we the light of the world because of our precious ultramodernity, or are we going to win because pockets of premodern values linger here? Were the heroes of Sept. 11, products of what is left of traditional American society, the sons of the "older, sturdier culture of courage, nobility, and sacrifice," or were they the "wretched,

servile, fatalistic, and intolerant human beings that traditional societies have always produced"?

Or is the sloppiness deliberate? Perhaps the subtext is, you can be the ultra-modern Starbucks guy, but you also get windfall benefits from the "older, sturdier culture," because we still have plenty of intolerant, churchgoing, heterosexual conservatives like the New York firemen to hide behind when the stuff hits the fan. In America, you can have it both ways. Is this a great country or what?

America is great, D'Souza says, because "more than any other society, it makes possible the good life, and the life that is good"—that is, it is a paradise for gluttony, appetite gratification, and impiety. This sort of thing would appeal only to a perpetual teenager, an egotist on the make, or a self-willed pig. That, apparently, is the sort of creatures Dinesh D'Souza thinks we are. ■

John Attarian, a writer in Ann Arbor, Mich., is the author of Social Security: False Consciousness and Crisis and Economism and the National Prospect.

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My Liberian Connection

"This international group would help run the country, backed by American dollars and foreign soldiers recruited from across the world, until Liberia proves

capable of running itself ..." So says a *New York Times* report on the United Nations' plan to save the penniless and starving country. This is the good news. Even better news is that pigs might fly.

Helping Liberia build a viable government sounds awfully good on paper; making it happen is a different matter altogether. Most African countries are kleptocracies run by brutal thugs and corrupt elites who manage to remain in power through systematic murder and mutilation of civilians. Some of them, like Angola, are oil-rich, yet the people are starving as all the wealth is siphoned off by crooks like Eduardo dos Santos, Angola's president. Countries like the Congo, Rwanda, and Sierra Leone are killing fields despite great diamond and mineral wealth.

The Rwandan genocide of 1994 killed some 800,000 Tutsis in 100 days, putting Stalin, Mao, and Pol Pot to shame. Tanzania is decaying, Kenya is moribund, Mozambique stagnant and ebbing away. In South Africa, the only viable African nation, there is a rape every 23 seconds and 55 murders each day. In Zimbabwe, once the breadbasket of the continent, the deranged psychopath Robert Mugabe's policies are starving half his people. Total anarchy reigns in Somalia. AIDS, starvation, unspeakable atrocities, and the ravages of war are the norm in Africa.

Last time Nigerian forces were sent to Liberia as peacekeepers during the mid-'90s, they not only engaged in systematic looting, they also trafficked in narcotics

and forced hundreds of ten-year-old girls into prostitution. So much for African solidarity. The present bunch of homicidal crooks make Idi Amin, the Ugandan buffoon who just left us, seem a benevolent dictator by comparison. At least Amin was a figure of fun, taking absurd titles like Conqueror of the British Empire and King of Scotland. Charles Taylor's only talent was in plundering state coffers and being a cold-blooded killer. These are the facts—not that anyone at the UN or in the U.S. Congress will admit them. Political correctness precludes any criticism of African leaders, no matter how corrupt and brutal.

Wishful thinking and UN plans aside, there is no hope for Africa as long as the so-called international community handles African kleptocracies with kid

combat AIDS, but all they're doing is lining the pockets of the ruling thieves. The only thing to do against such a gross lack of humanity and greed is to stay away, however cynical and cruel it sounds. My friend Radek Payac, a Pole, warned me of this a very long time ago.

It was 1958, and my father had just built the largest textile factory in Africa, in Khartoum. Five thousand workers worked three shifts in air-conditioned comfort in a then state-of-the-art textile mill. The Sudanese president, General Abboud, was a man the American first lady, Jackie Kennedy, later called "one of the most interesting leaders [she had] ever met." I knew Abboud well. Once a week I had to go to the presidential palace and hand him a fistful of British pounds. (That didn't bother me as much as his habit of always picking his nose prior to shaking hands with me.) Payac was our foreman and always in trouble with the fuzz, which kept insisting on bribes. An honest man, he one day had

AT LEAST **IDI AMIN** WAS A **FIGURE OF FUN**, TAKING ABSURD TITLES LIKE **CONQUEROR OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE** AND **KING OF SCOTLAND**.

gloves. The idea that an ex-leader of Yugoslavia is on trial in The Hague for crimes against humanity while homicidal psychopaths like Mengistu, Taylor, and Mugabe are walking around free is ludicrous and absurd. Africa is the heart of darkness and despair, and no amount of good will by bleeding hearts will make the slightest difference. A trillion dollars *per annum* for Africa will only make trillions of African leaders. Clinton and Bush can bang on about helping Africa

enough and quit. "This country will never improve. Your father's wasting his time," he told me on the way to the airport. "I will leave first class, you will probably have to swim for it." Sure enough his predictions came true. Abboud was overthrown by a descendant of the Mahdi; my father had to send a private plane to get me out while Muslim hordes were yelling, "Let's get the big man's son." Eight years later, while on my way down to Kenya (ironically with

Prince Radziwill, whose wife was Jackie Kennedy's sister), I drove to the factory site only to find a burnt-out wreck.

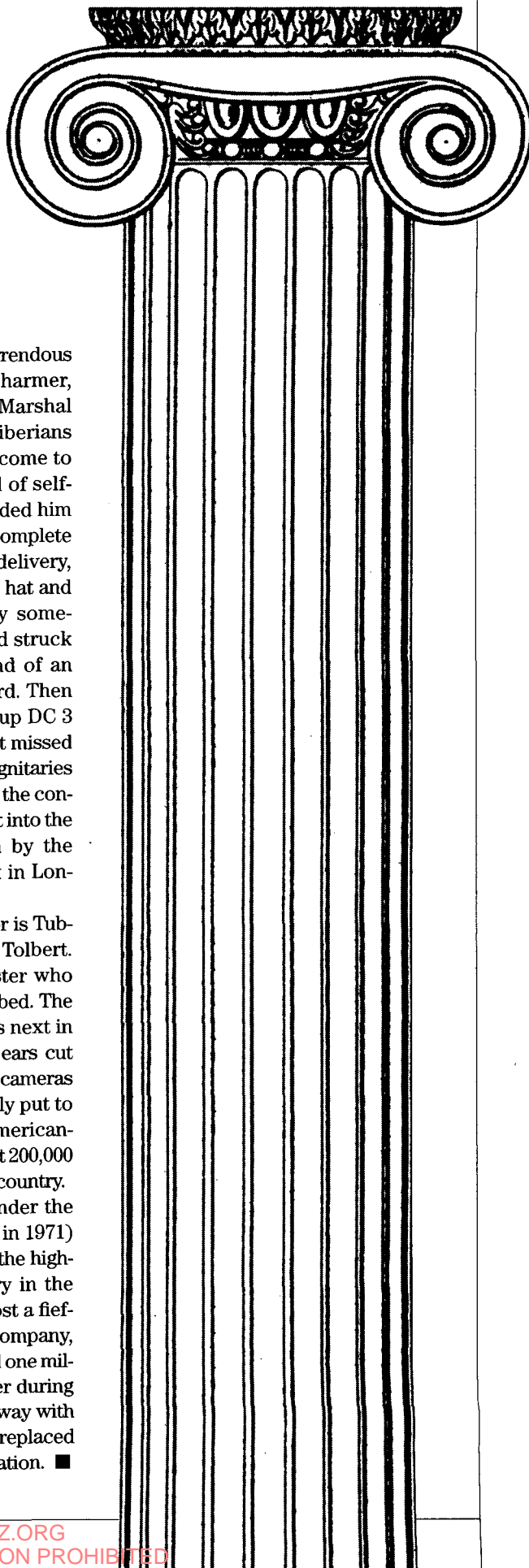
Just about the time the Sudanese mobs were making sure 5,000 of their fellow citizens lost their air-conditioned jobs, the Congo got its independence, as did many other African nations. In no time, the world's most expensive prep school, Le Rosey in Gstaad, Switzerland, began to receive the scions of African leaders. The young Kasavubu I remember well. His father was head of the Congo less than a year when the kid arrived in Gstaad covered in gold with five flunkies living in the Palace Hotel, attending to all his needs. Soon after, his successor, Mobutu (after a coup, of course), began buying Swiss real estate in the tens of millions, eventually impoverishing his rich country and depositing it all in Swiss banks. When one of his drivers ran over a child while drunk, it was immediately hushed up in case the Congolese buffoon withdrew his moolah. My friend Freddy Burundi, exiled King of Rwanda Burundi, then decided it was time to go home. Freddy was a very good-looking young man with a beautiful blonde German girlfriend. We warned him about Africa, but the only one who listened was the German. Freddy was murdered upon his return and then eaten.

My Liberian connection was the funniest, however. My father owned some Liberian-flagged ships, Liberia being a flag of convenience. One day around 1968, I was visited by a Liberian diplomat who asked me whether I knew anyone who for a price could supply Liberia with an air force. I knew just the person. Peter West was a Harold-Wilson look-alike, an upper class ne'er do well always

in debt and prone to commit horrendous swindles. Westy was a great charmer, and his father had been Air Marshal West between the wars. The Liberians were very impressed. "You've come to the right man," said Westy full of self-importance. The Liberians handed him £40,000 and expected a rather complete air force in return. The day of delivery, President Tubman stood in top hat and tails on a podium with Westy somewhere behind him. As the band struck the national anthem the sound of an approaching airplane was heard. Then disaster. An ancient and beat-up DC 3 yawing massively to the left just missed Tubman and other top-hatted dignitaries and crashed in full view. During the confusion Westy beat a hasty retreat into the bush never to be seen again by the enraged Liberians. Once back in London, he dined out on the story.

West is no longer with us, nor is Tubman or his successor William Tolbert. The latter was a Baptist minister who was to be disemboweled in his bed. The semi-literate Sergeant Doe was next in line, and eventually had both his ears cut off by one Prince Johnson, with cameras rolling, before he was mercifully put to death. He was followed by American-educated Charles Taylor who left 200,000 dead and totally devastated the country.

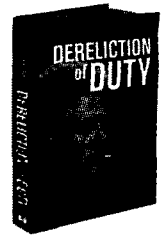
The horrible irony is that under the leadership of Tubman (he died in 1971) Liberia enjoyed for some years the highest growth rate of any country in the world. At that time it was almost a fiefdom of the Firestone Rubber Company, Harvey Firestone having planted one million acres of Liberia with rubber during the '20s. But African pride did away with foreign private investment and replaced it with an almost biblical devastation. ■





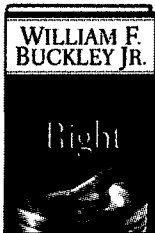
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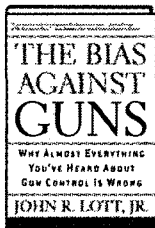
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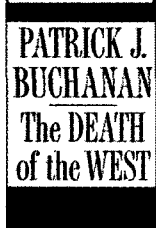
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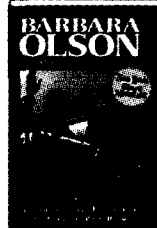
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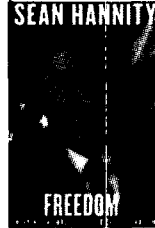
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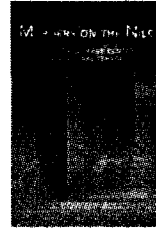
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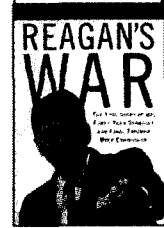
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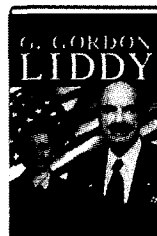
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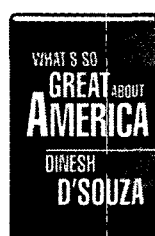
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